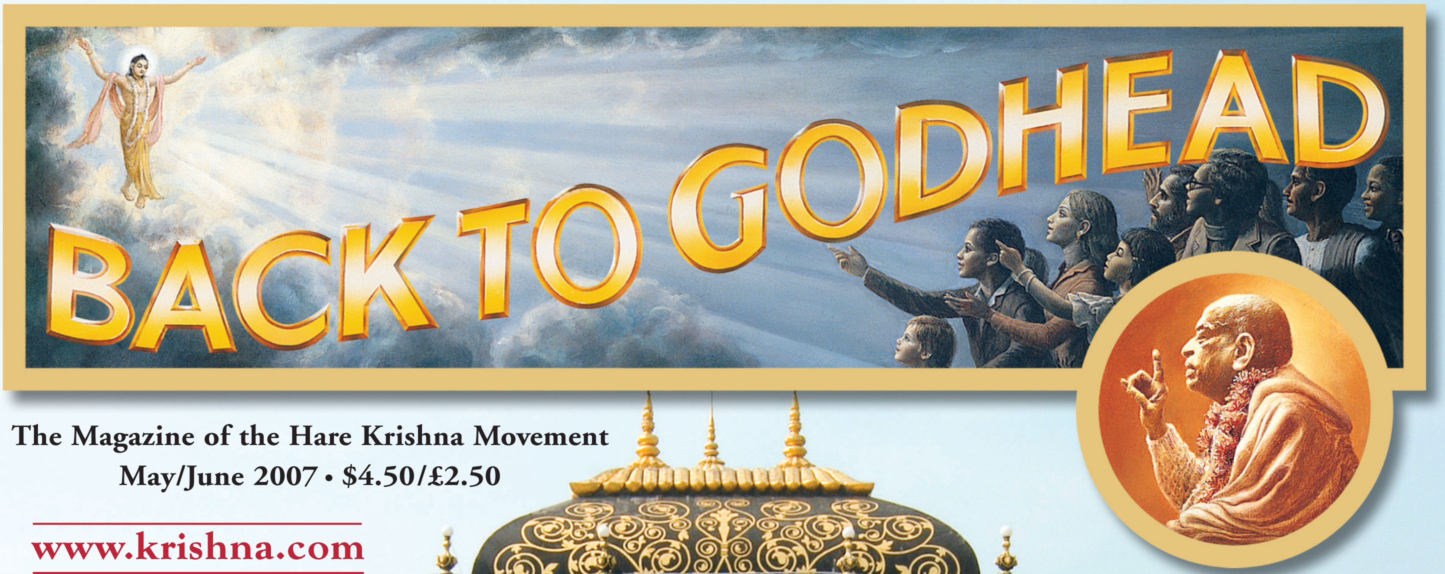
Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience.



BACK TO GODHEAD

The Magazine of the Hare Krishna Movement
May/June 2007 • $4.50/£2.50

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Kuli Mela

In New Vrindavan, the largest gathering of Hare Kṛṣṇa youth ever! Exploring who they are and what they can accomplish.

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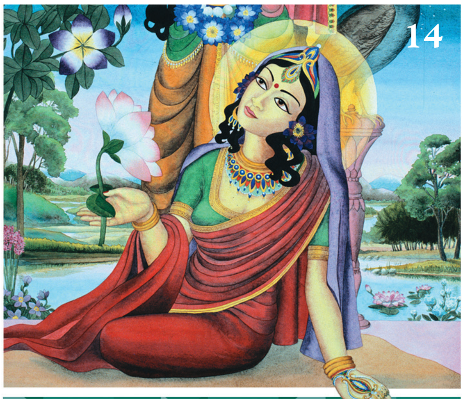
Back to Godh

Founded 1944 • Vol. 41, No. 3 • May / June 2007



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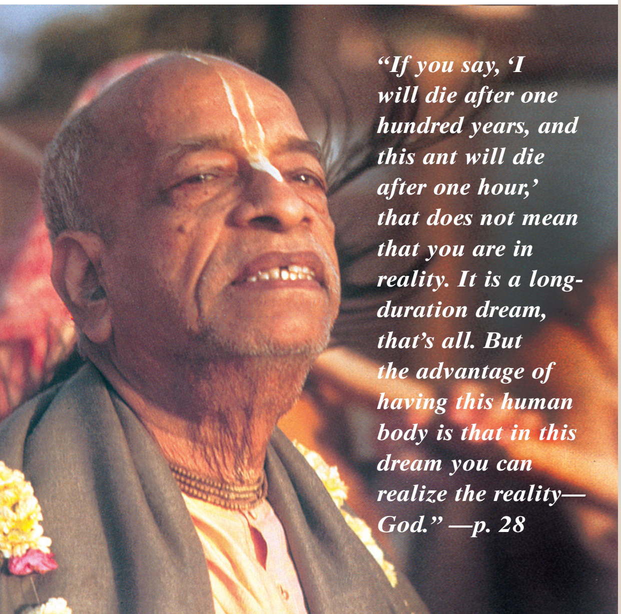
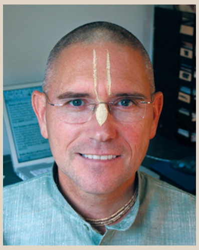
COVER Members of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement's second and third generations in front of Prabhupāda's Palace of Gold in New Vrindavan, West Virginia, where they gathered for a reunion last summer. Please see the article beginning on page 44. (Photo by Chris Bryant.)



"If you say, 'I will die after one hundred years, and this ant will die after one hour,' that does not mean that you are in reality. It is a long-duration dream, that's all. But the advantage of having this human body is that in this dream you can realize the reality—God." —p. 28

WELCOME



IN THIS ISSUE we hear from BTG staff member Madhava Smullen. Having grown up in the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, he tells us about his peers (known informally as *gurukulis*) and their desire to harness their shared experiences and natural friendships for great things. In *Kuli Mela: The Tipping Point* he relates how those planning last summer's *gurukuli* reunion wanted to make it more productive and Kṛṣṇa conscious than previous ones. The success of the event has inspired hope for increased spiritual contributions from *gurukulis* to the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement and the world.

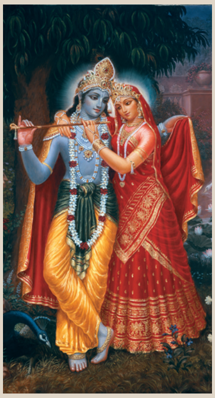
Two articles in this issue deal with the question of our freedom to choose what we make of our lives. In Śrīla Prabhupāda's opening lecture, *Opting for Godly Qualities,* he discusses how Kṛṣṇa allows us to decide what kind of life we want to live, even providing whatever we need. In *How Free Are We?* Navin Jani presents a summary of the debate about free will in Western philosophy and then shows how a Vedic perspective can resolve the conflict.

One of our regular features—*How I Came to Kṛṣṇa Consciousness*—implies freedom of choice. In this issue, Purnendu Baroowa, from Pune, India, tells us what inspired him to choose Kṛṣṇa.

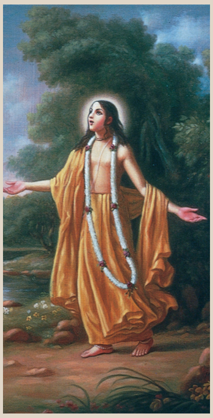
Hare Kṛṣṇa.—*Nāgarāja Dāsa, Editor*

OUR PURPOSES

- To help all people discern reality from illusion, spirit from matter, the eternal from the temporary.
- To expose the faults of materialism.
- To offer guidance in the Vedic techniques of spiritual life.
- To preserve and spread the Vedic culture.
- To celebrate the chanting of the holy names of God as taught by Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.
- To help every living being remember and serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead.



Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa are together the one Supreme Absolute Truth.



Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the combined incarnation of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, inaugurated the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa five hundred years ago.

His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

BACK TO GODHEAD

The Magazine of the
Hare Krishna Movement

FOUNDER (under the direction of His Divine Grace Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda) **His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda**

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Letters

Ganges Dip Versus Chanting

I am an aspiring devotee and an ardent fan of BTG magazine. I know of a few people who are non-devotees, don't chant, and ignore the superiority of Lord Kṛṣṇa. They don't bother much about liberation from their karma, and they eat meat. But they make it a point to go to the Ganges every year for a holy dip. Do they get liberated? What are the merits they receive compared to one who thinks of Kṛṣṇa all the time and chants daily but has not bathed in the Ganges or visited any holy places?

Kavitha Jaganathan
Via the Internet

Our reply: Your question calls to mind a famous verse from the teachings of Lord Kapila in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (3.33.7):

"Oh, how glorious are they whose tongues are chanting Your holy name! Even if born in the families of dog-eaters, such persons are worshipable. Persons who chant the holy name of Your Lordship must have executed all kinds of austerities and fire sacrifices and achieved all the good manners of the Āryans. To be chanting the holy name of Your Lordship, they must have bathed at holy places of pilgrimage, studied the *Vedas*, and fulfilled everything required."

To be chanting the holy name, you must have bathed in all the sacred places in your previous life.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.18.11 addresses the relative merits of hearing the glories of the Lord and bathing in the Ganges:

"By associating with persons for whom the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Mukunda, is the all in all, one can hear of His powerful activities and soon come to understand them. The activities of Mukunda are so potent that simply by hearing of them one immediately associates with the Lord. For a person who constantly and very eagerly hears narrations of the Lord's powerful activities, the Absolute Truth, the Personality of Godhead in the form of sound vibrations, enters within his heart and cleanses it of all contamination. On the other hand, although bathing in the Ganges diminishes bodily contaminations and infections, this process and the process of visiting holy places can cleanse the heart only after a long time. Therefore who is the sane man who will not associate with devotees to quickly perfect his life?"

The conclusion is that bathing in the Ganges is purifying, but not as purifying as devotional service, which destroys one's materialistic mentality very quickly. We can get free from sinful reactions by bathing in the Ganges, but if we commit more sins due to our polluted mind, we will again have to suffer. But pure devotional service, which begins with the chanting of the holy name, is so powerful it destroys the tendency to commit sins, and so it is the ultimate solution.

Kṛṣṇa Consciousness In Bulgaria

Thank you very much for the article *Kṛṣṇa Scenes in Bulgaria* in the January/February issue. It is nice to show to people in the countries of Western Europe because it demonstrates how Kṛṣṇa consciousness is developing in places that were not so long ago behind the Iron Curtain.

Madhvācārya Dāsa
France

Regarding the article *Kṛṣṇa Scenes in Bulgaria*, it is inspiring to hear about devotees enthusiastically spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness, organizing Rathayātrās, and engaging their education in Kṛṣṇa's service. We can learn so much from one another and good examples like this.

Īśāna Dāsa
Slovenia

Kṛṣṇa's Godhood and The Name Madhusūdana

Thank you for printing Satyarāja Dāsa's articles, which I always find informative and even enlightening. His recent article on the name *Madhusūdana,* which belongs to Kṛṣṇa, was especially interesting. I, too, have noticed that at pivotal points in Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, when His identity as God might be questioned, the name Madhusūdana arises, showing that He is indeed Viṣṇu, or God almighty. A prominent example of this is in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.30.35), when Kṛṣṇa chooses to return to the spiritual world. When Jarā shoots Him in the foot, He manifests His four-armed form and, indeed, is referred to as Madhusūdana.

Surya
New Hyde Park, New York

Gently Smashing Atheists

Your editorial *Science and Scientism* [Sep/Oct 2006] is one of the best brief pieces on the subject I have ever read. It is objective, yet conclusive and persuasive. It's the legendary "iron fist in a velvet glove" at its best, softly pinching and punching atheistic fanaticism. It dispassionately dismantles the image of the unbiased scientists through eye-opening analysis and revealing quotes by scientists themselves. Thank you.

I also very much enjoyed *The Importance of Śrī Īśopaniṣad,* by Satyarāja Dāsa, in the January/February issue. He is comprehensive in his research, creative in his approach, and concise in his presentation of whatever subject he chooses to write on. Kudos to him.

Caitanya Caraṇa Dāsa
Pune, India

Deprived of Seeing the Deities

What offense must a devotee have committed to be deprived of seeing the deities in the temple?

Ellington Kakumor
Nigeria

Our reply: If one is offensive to the devotees, the Lord will arrange for that person to lose the devotees' association, both to protect the devotees from the offensive behavior and to protect the offender from committing more offenses and further degrading himself. The same would be true of devotees who offend the deities repeatedly without remorse or an attempt to improve. The Lord acts to elevate the devotee, and thus if one is offensive to the deity, the Lord will separate the devotee from the deity so that he will not degrade himself more and more.

Books such as *The Nectar of Devotion* list offenses in the service of the deity (*sevā-aparādhas*). One must try to avoid these. The chanting of the holy name will purify us from the *sevā-aparādhas,* but one who does not try to give up the *sevā-aparādhas*—thinking "they are not so bad because by my chanting I will become free from the reactions"—commits the great offense of sinning on the strength of the holy name. One should be very careful about this.

Replies were written by Kṛṣṇa-kṛpā Dāsa.

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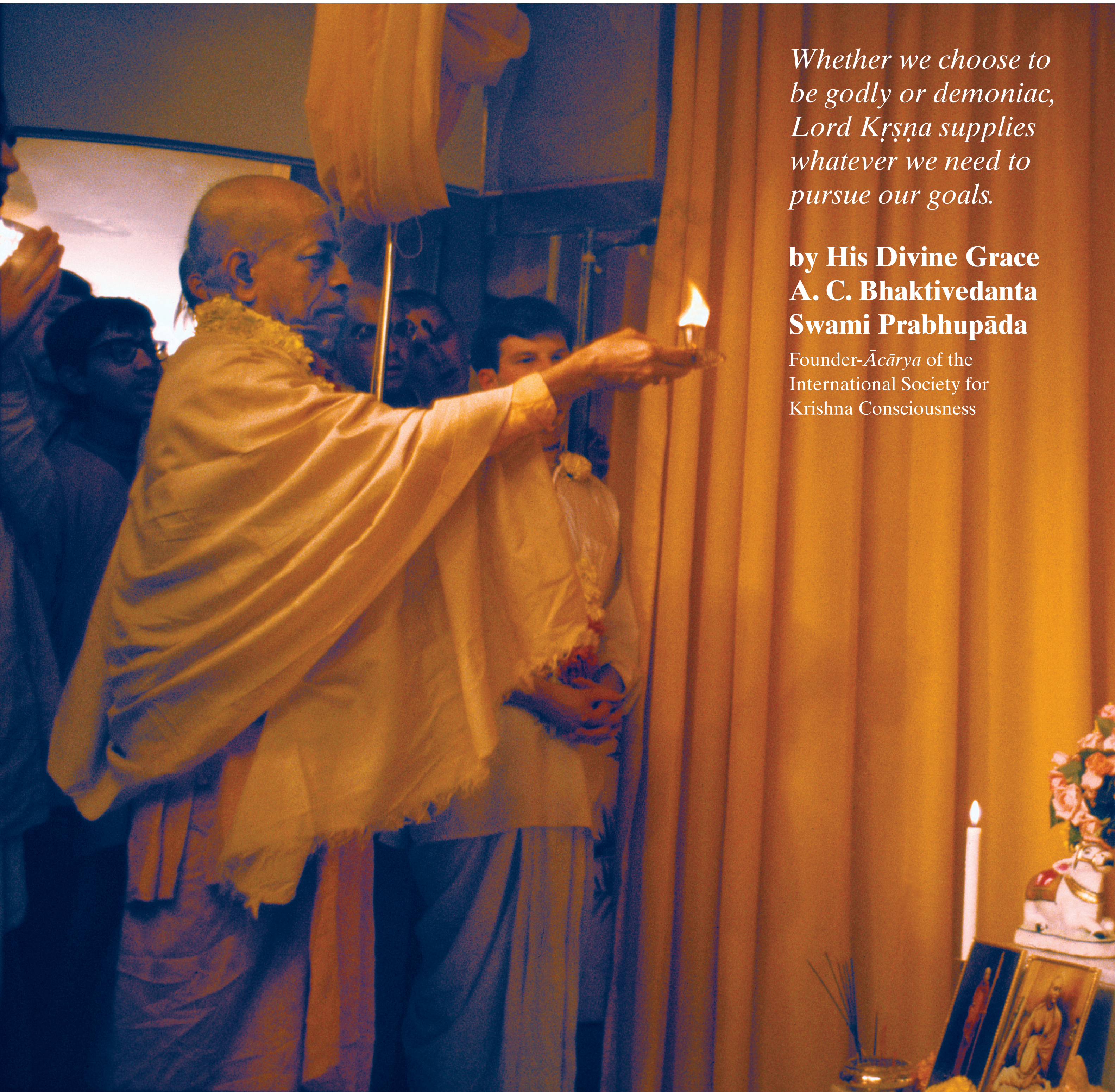
FOUNDER'S LECTURE

Honolulu, Hawaii—January 30, 1975

Opting for Godly



Whether we choose to be godly or demoniac, Lord Kṛṣṇa supplies whatever we need to pursue our goals.

by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

Founder-*Ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

Qualities

dambho darpo ’bhimānaś ca
krodhaḥ pāruṣyam eva ca
ajñānaṁ cābhijātasya
pārtha sampadam āsurīm

“Pride, arrogance, conceit, anger, harshness, and ignorance—these qualities belong to those of demoniac nature, O son of Pṛthā.”
—*Bhagavad-gītā* 16.4

WE DISCUSSED last night some of the divine characteristics, and here Lord Kṛṣṇa lists some demoniac characteristics. We can understand a thing by analysis of its characteristics. In the chemical laboratory, things are tested by characteristics: “The color is like this. The shape is like this. The taste is like this. The chemical reaction is like this.” When these characteristics are stated for a chemical, then we can understand its purity.

The characteristics of a thing are also called its dharma. A snake, for example, will bite without provocation, and the bitten animal dies. This is the snake’s characteristic.

Cāṇakya Paṇḍita says, *sarpaḥ krūraḥ khalaḥ krūraḥ sarpāt krūrataraḥ khalaḥ*. There are two kinds of envious animals. One is the snake, and the other is the envious man. And according to Cāṇakya Paṇḍita, “Both of them are envious, but the envious man is more

A true exemplar of godly qualities, Śrīla Prabhupāda offers the first ārati *to Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Parisīśvara after Their installation in Paris in 1974.*

dangerous than the envious snake." Why? "Because the snake can be brought into submission by herbs and mantras." There are snake charmers who chant mantras and use herbs to subjugate snakes. But *khalaḥ kena nivāryate:* "The snakelike man cannot be subdued at any cost."

By characteristics we can understand who is a godly man and who is a demoniac man. The next verse says *daivī sampad vimokṣāya nibandhāyāsurī matā.* If we have divine characteristics, we are eligible to go to the spiritual world—*vimokṣāya.* But if we have the demoniac characteristics mentioned in today's verse, then we are in material bondage.

> ***It is my choice whether I shall become a demon or a devotee. Kṛṣṇa is equal to everyone.***

We are the cause of our material bondage or freedom from material bondage. There is no other cause. We simply have to develop either the demoniac characteristics or the divine characteristics. Human life is meant for developing divine, not demoniac, characteristics.

Demoniac characteristics are already there. Take *dambhaḥ,* pride, for example. A dog has pride: "I am this dog, *grrr.*" "I am a fox terrier. I am this. I am that." Pride is present even in dogs and cats and lower animals. But divine characteristics are rare: "Oh, I am so low. I am lower than the grass." This is one of Caitanya Mahāprabhu's teachings. Why should I be proud? Pride is due to ignorance. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, the author of the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta,* describes himself: "I am lower than the worms in the stool."

Proud to be Kṛṣṇa's Servant

Why should I be proud? What have I got? "I am the humble servant of Kṛṣṇa. Let me discharge my duties." If one is proud to be aspiring to become a pure servant of Kṛṣṇa, that is very good. That pride is glorious. "I am a servant of Kṛṣṇa." That is very nice.

We have the tendency to be proud. Your pride to become cats or dogs or tigers or so-called big men of this material world is the cause of your bondage. But pride to become the most confidential servant of Kṛṣṇa is the cause of your liberation. If you become proud and think, "I am a government minister" or "I am a big dog," that is the cause of your bondage. You will continue in material life. Of course, spiritual pride is glorious only when one is actually situated on the spiritual platform. Otherwise, that pride is also ignorance.

So two things are there: *daivī sampad* (godly qualities) and *āsurī sampad* (demoniac qualities). *Āsurī sampad* means more and more entanglement and bondage within the material world. And *daivī sampad* means freedom from the material world.

First of all you must decide what you want. Whatever you want you will have. Kṛṣṇa is very kind. If you want to, you can remain bound up by the laws of material nature within the material world. As we are contaminated by the different material modes of nature, we get different situations of life, different forms of body, different circumstances. Kṛṣṇa has arranged everything very accurately. His arrangement is perfect. When He wants to do something, He does it simply by His desire. By His desire His energies do the work.

We also have some energies, and when we desire to do something, our energies begin to work. We have a limited number of energies, and Kṛṣṇa has an unlimited number of energies. If you desire, Kṛṣṇa can supply your necessities unlimitedly. That freedom is there. If you want to remain as a demon, then Kṛṣṇa will supply you all the ingredients you need to flourish as a demon.

Kṛṣṇa Gives Whatever We Want

We can consider the examples of Hiraṇyakaśipu and Prahlāda. Prahlāda was being supplied the necessities for spiritual advancement in life, and Hiraṇyakaśipu was being supplied for the demoniac status of life. It is Kṛṣṇa's pleasure to give you whatever you want. You can get all advantages from Kṛṣṇa. If you want to become a demon, Kṛṣṇa will supply you: "All right, become a demon. Take whatever you want from Me." He will give you what you want. Similarly, if you want to become a demigod or a devotee, Kṛṣṇa will supply you all the necessities. It is my choice whether I shall become a demon or a devotee. Kṛṣṇa is equal to everyone. Otherwise how is He God? If He is partial to somebody, then He is not God. He must be equal. He is equal to the devotee and the nondevotee. Whatever the nondevotees want, Kṛṣṇa supplies. And whatever the devotees want, Kṛṣṇa supplies.

But He is very pleased with the devotee. Therefore, the devotee's supplies are given immediately, whereas the demoniac person's supplies depend on his work, or karma. That is the difference. Kṛṣṇa says that. *Ye bhajanti tu māṁ bhaktyā mayi te teṣu cāpy aham:* "Whoever renders service unto Me in devotion is a friend, is in Me, and I am also a friend to him." [*Bhagavad-gītā* 9.29] There are millions of living beings. Some of them are devotees, and many of them are nondevotees. Kṛṣṇa is kind to the nondevotees also. Whatever the nondevotee wants, Kṛṣṇa will give him. But the necessities of the devotee are the first consideration for Kṛṣṇa. As the devotee is only searching for the opportunity to serve Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa is also very eager to serve the devotee. That is the reciprocation of devotional service.

It is our choice whether to become a devotee or remain a demon. Kṛṣṇa says, "Give up this demoniac engagement and surrender to Me." That is Kṛṣṇa's desire. But if you do not agree with Kṛṣṇa's desire, if you want to enjoy your own desire, then Kṛṣṇa is pleased to supply your necessities. But that is not very good. We should agree to Kṛṣṇa's desires. We should not allow our demoniac desires to grow. We should sacrifice our desires. That is called *tapasya.* We should only accept Kṛṣṇa's desire. That is the instruction of the *Bhagavad-gītā.* Arjuna's desire was not to fight, but Kṛṣṇa's desire was to fight—just the opposite. Arjuna ultimately agreed to Kṛṣṇa's desire: "Yes, I will act according to Your desire." That is *bhakti.*

This is the difference between *bhakti* and karma. Karma means to fulfill my desires, and *bhakti* means to fulfill Kṛṣṇa's desires. That is the difference. Now you make your choice—whether you want to fulfill your desires or Kṛṣṇa's. If you decide to fulfill Kṛṣṇa's desires, then your life is successful.

Vṛndāvana Consciousness

That is our Kṛṣṇa conscious life. "Kṛṣṇa wants it; I must do it. I will not do anything for me." That is the mood of Vṛndāvana. All the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana are trying to fulfill Kṛṣṇa's desire. The cowherds boys, the calves, the cows, the trees, the flowers, the water, the *gopīs,* the elderly inhabitants, mother Yaśodā, Nanda—they are all engaged in fulfilling Kṛṣṇa's desire. That is Vṛndāvana. You can turn the material world into Vṛndāvana provided you agree to fulfill the desires of Kṛṣṇa. That is Vṛndāvana. And if you want to fulfill your own desires, that is the material world. This is the difference between material and spiritual.

For example, we have this house—a temple—and our neighbors have their house, a *karmī's* house. What is the difference? The difference is that in this house everyone is engaged in fulfilling Kṛṣṇa's desire, and in the other house, everyone is engaged in fulfilling his own desire. Therefore this is a temple, and that is only a house. Otherwise, from the external features, what is the difference? The same stone, the same wood, the same plants, the same land, the same kitchen—everything is the same. But here the business is to satisfy Kṛṣṇa, and in the other houses the business is to satisfy one's own senses. That is the difference between *kāma* and *prema.* When you try to fulfill the desires of Kṛṣṇa, that is *prema.* And when you want to fulfill your own desires, that is called *kāma.* There is no third thing.

Consider the *gopīs.* They are going to Kṛṣṇa, being captivated by His beauty, just as a young girl becomes captivated by seeing a very nice boy, or a nice boy is captivated to see the beauty of a girl. That is sense gratification. That is not *prema;* that is *kāma.* When the *gopīs* go to Kṛṣṇa, it is superficially the same as young girls going to a young boy, but the *gopīs* are going for Kṛṣṇa's satisfaction, not for their own satisfaction. That is sublime.

Therefore even Caitanya Mahāprabhu held the *gopīs* in high esteem. *Ramyā kācid upāsanā vraja-vadhū-vargeṇa yā kalpitā:* "There is no better type of worship than was conceived by the *gopīs.*" Caitanya Mahāprabhu admitted that the topmost method of worshiping Kṛṣṇa is the type of worship offered by the *gopīs.* The six Gosvāmīs also were always thinking of the *gopīs'* service to Kṛṣṇa.

So two things: the divine characteristics and the demoniac characteristics. Now you have to select which one you want. If you actually want to love Kṛṣṇa, then take the divine characteristics. You can practice those. That is devotional life.

Thank you very much.

What Is the Hare Kṛṣṇa Movement?

Founded in 1966 by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) carries on a great ancient tradition rooted in the *Bhagavad-gītā,* the teachings Lord Kṛṣṇa spoke five millennia ago. The *Gītā* and the other Vedic scriptures declare Kṛṣṇa to be the original person, God Himself, who appears periodically in this world to liberate all living beings.

Only five hundred years ago, Kṛṣṇa descended as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to teach the most sublime and effective means of meditation for the present day: the chanting of the names of God, especially as found in the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra.

Today members of ISKCON continue Lord Caitanya's movement by distributing the teachings of Lord Kṛṣṇa and the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra all over the world.

Pronunciation

We spell Sanskrit words and names by a phonetic system that lets you know how to say each word. Pronounce short **a** like the **u** in b**u**t, long **ā** like the **a** in f**a**r (and held twice as long as the short **a**). Pronounce **e** like the **a** in ev**a**de, long **ī** like the **i** in p**i**que. Pronounce the vowel **ṛ** like the **ri** in **ri**m, and **c** like the **ch** in **ch**air. Pronounce consonants like **ch, jh,** and **dh** as in staun**ch-h**eart, hed**ge-h**og, and re**d-h**ot. Pronounce **ś** and **ṣ** like **sh.** So for *Kṛṣṇa* say KRISHNA, for *Caitanya* say CHAITANYA.

Spiritual Names

ISKCON members receive names of Lord Kṛṣṇa or his great devotees, combined with Dāsa, for men, or Dāsī, for women, both of which mean "servant." For instance, the name Kṛṣṇa Dāsa means "servant of Kṛṣṇa."

When Science Points to Spiritua

Using a Mercedes to plow is like using the human body to pursue materialistic goals rather than for its intended purpose: self-realization.

lity

Modern research is confirming the Vedic viewpoint that human life is meant for more than the pursuit of material pleasure.

by Caitanya Caraṇa Dāsa

Yamarāja Dāsa

IMAGINE A FARMER who gets a Mercedes Benz as a gift. The only vehicle he has ever seen is a tractor, and the only purpose he knows for any vehicle is plowing. So he hitches a yoke to his new Mercedes and starts driving it over his field. Of course, not only does his attempt at plowing fail; his new car malfunctions. He becomes totally frustrated—with himself, his car, and his field.

Ridiculous, we might say, that somebody would use a Mercedes to plow. But could this be the story of our life? The Vedic scriptures—and the scriptures of all the great religions of the world—say that human life is meant for achieving, not material enjoyment, but spiritual fulfillment. The Vedic scriptures further explain that the human body is a precious vehicle that the soul gets after transmigrating through 8.4 million species. In all subhuman bodies, the soul has access only to material pleasure, through fulfilling the bodily demands of eating, sleeping, mating, and defending. All material pleasure is troublesome to acquire. Even when acquired, it is unsatisfying because of the body's limited capacity to enjoy. And even this paltry pleasure is inevitably curtailed by disease and old age, and terminated by death.

Only in the human body is the soul's consciousness evolved enough to access a superior source of pleasure—love of God. The Vedic scriptures explain that love of God enables the soul to attain eternal happiness in the spiritual world, his original home. Achieving this love of God is the specific and exclusive purpose for which the soul should use the human body.

We can compare the subhuman bodies, which offer flickering bodily pleasures, to tractors meant for plowing a field. And we can compare the human body, which can offer the soul everlasting happiness, to a posh Mercedes meant for a smooth ride. Using the human body for sensual pleasures is not much different from using a car for plowing.

Because we see almost everyone around us pursuing material goals—sex, wealth, luxuries, prestige, power, fame—we assume such pursuits to be the natural purpose of life. But, as the saying goes, "Do not think you're on the right road just because it's well-worn."

Let the Facts Speak

When we use a Mercedes to plow, three things result: a spoiled field, a wrecked car, and a frustrated driver. Analogously, let's see what science has discovered about using the human body only for sensual pleasure. Specifically, what happens to the environment (the field), the human body (the car), and ourselves (the driver)?

The environment: Biologist E. O. Wilson, among many other scientists, has studied the complex interdependence among various species in the biosphere. He found that every species makes some contribution to the ecology of the planet. For example, if vegetation decreases, herbivores suffer, then carnivores. But he found that one species doesn't contribute to the ecology—the human species. If the human species became extinct, there would hardly be any problems for any other species or for the ecology. In fact, human extinction would solve most ecological problems. The human species is arguably the most intelligent species on the planet. Normally the more intelligent the student, the more positive his contribution. Then why is it that, among all species, our human contribution to the ecology is not the most positive, but the most negative? Can it be that our contribution is meant to be at a level higher than the physical?

Could it be that we are being tragically misled into abusing the human body for activities it is not designed for?

The human body: How do activities many consider enjoyable affect the human body? Smoking causes lung disease, drinking leads to liver diseases, eating nonvegetarian and junk food ruins digestion, and illicit sex—that perpetually over-hyped carnal pleasure—brings AIDS, an epidemic for which there is no aid. Modern society, education, and media indoctrinate us into believing that material enjoyment is the goal of life. But this "enjoyment" causes our worst suffering. Could it be that we are being tragically misled into abusing the human body for activities it is not designed for?

Ourselves: And what about the effect on ourselves? Scientists are still groping in the dark about who or what the self is. But one thing is for sure: the more modern society neglects or rejects spiritual growth, the more trouble the self gets into. This is evident from our spiraling mental health problems. The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared that mental diseases—stress, depression, addiction, psychosomatic problems—will be the greatest health hazard of the current century. Worse still, WHO statistics show that over one million people commit suicide every year. That's more than the total annual deaths from wars and crimes combined. And this figure is only the reported number of suicides.

Mental disease and suicide have many causes. But the common origin is frustration in achieving one's goals, whatever they may be. When this frustration rises to an acute and hopeless degree, one feels one's very existence to be an agony. And the ending of one's existence appears to be the only solution. Why is it that we modern humans, the most "intelligent" among all species, are the only species whose members commit suicide in such alarmingly high numbers? WHO calls suicide "a tragic social health problem" and states that there is no proven cure for it. Could it be that the goals society sets for us are incompatible with our selves and invite the frustration that leads to mental health problems and ultimately suicide?

See and Believe

How does channeling our human energy for spiritual elevation affect ecology, human health, and the self? Lets see what science says.

Ecology: Most environmental problems have arisen from the materialism and consumerism that has accompanied the decline of spirituality and its inherent self-restraint. Therefore the following quote from Alan Durning of the World Watch Institute represents what many scientists consider to be the only hope for saving the environment: "In a fragile biosphere, the ultimate fate of humanity may depend on whether we can cultivate a deeper sense of self-restraint, founded on a widespread ethic of limiting consumption and finding nonmaterial enrichment." All forms of nonmaterial enrichment—prayer, meditation, yoga, chanting the holy names—clearly point to a spiritual dimension to life. And this spiritual dimension is most comprehensively explained in the Vedic scriptures. In fact, the *Vedānta-sūtra* begins with a clarion call: *athāto brahma jijñāsā,* "Now therefore [now that you have a human body], devote yourself to spiritual enquiry." (*Vedānta-sūtra* 1.1.1)

Human health: The current epidemic of indulgence-born diseases shows that universal scriptural injunctions for self-restraint—sobriety (no intoxication) and continence (no illicit sex), for example—are sound health advice too. Herbert Benson of the Harvard Medical School, citing extensive research on the physical and mental benefits of spiritual living, states that the human body and mind are "wired for God." Not only that, a survey published in *Reader's Digest* (January 2001) stated that believers in God live an average of eleven years more than nonbelievers.

The self: And what about the self? Science has come up with a precious finding: spirituality is a sure solace for the self. Survey after survey has shown that spiritual practices protect people from self-destructive behavior and habits. Patrick Glynn of George Washington University writes in his book *God: The Evidence* that surveys show that those who don't attend prayer meetings are four times more prone to suicide than those who do. Further, the giving up of such meetings has been found to be the best predictor of suicide, better even than unemployment.

(*please turn to page 58*)

Glossary

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Ācārya—a spiritual master who teaches by example.
Balarāma—Lord Kṛṣṇa's first expansion, who acts in the role of Lord Kṛṣṇa's elder brother.
Battle of Kurukshetra—an epic battle for rule of the world, fought five thousand years ago.
Bhagavad-gītā—the sacred book in which Lord Kṛṣṇa gives the essence of knowledge to his friend and disciple Arjuna.
Bhakti—devotional service to the Supreme Lord.
Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura—the spiritual master of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.
Bhakti-yoga—linking with the Supreme Lord through devotional service.
Caitanya Mahāprabhu—the incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa who appeared five hundred years ago to teach the chanting of the names of God as the religion for the present age.
Dharma—(1) ordained duties or religious principles; (2) one's eternal, natural occupation (i.e., devotional service to the Lord).
Godhead—the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Reality, progressively realized first as the impersonal all-pervasive oneness, more fully as the Supersoul within the heart of every living being, and ultimately as the all-opulent Supreme Person.
Gurukula—a school where children learn the philosophy and practices of Kṛṣṇa consciousness along with regular academic subjects (literally "the place of the guru").
Hare Kṛṣṇa—the great mantra Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.
ISKCON—the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.
Japa—individual chanting of names of God, usually while counting on beads.
Kali-yuga—in the endlessly repeated cycle of four cosmic ages, the present and worst age, the Age of Quarrel, of which 5,000 of 432,000 years have passed.
Karma—material action; its inevitable reaction; or the law by which such action and reaction are governed.
Kīrtana—congregational singing of names of God, usually accompanied by cymbals (*karatālas*) and drums (*mṛdaṅgas*).
Kṛṣṇa—the Supreme Personality of Godhead in his original transcendental form (see "Godhead").
Mahābhārata—the epic history of ancient India, a history in which the *Bhagavad-gītā* appears as the most important and well-known text.
Māyā—illusion; the energy of the Supreme Lord that deludes living entities into forgetting their spiritual nature and forgetting God.
Māyāvādī—one who regards the A ultimately impersonal.
Modes of nature—the three qualities (and ignorance) that hold sway over all act material world.
Nityānanda—the incarnation of Lord Balarāma who appeared with Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu.
Prasādam—vegetarian food that has been prepared for the Lord and offered to him with devotion (literally "mercy").
Purāṇas—Vedic histories.
Rādhārāṇī—Lord Kṛṣṇa's consort and pleasure potency.
Rathayātrā—"chariot festival": a festival in which the form of Kṛṣṇa is borne in procession on a large canopy-topped chariot or float, especially the festival originating in Puri, India, for Jagannātha (Lord Kṛṣṇa, "the Lord of the universe").
Sannyāsa—the renounced life of a man who relinquishes home to dedicate himself fully to the Supreme.
Śrī—an honorific meaning "opulent" (similarly: Śrīla, Śrīmad, Śrīmān, Śrīmatī).
Śrīla Prabhupāda—His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam—the most important of the eighteen *Purāṇas,* which tells of the nature and pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa and his devotees.
Supersoul—the form of the Lord who resides in every heart along with the individual soul.
Upaniṣads—the 108 essential philosophical treatises that appear within the *Vedas.*
Vaiṣṇava—a devotee of the Supreme Lord (from the word *Viṣṇu*).
Varṇāśrama—the Vedic social system. It organizes society into four occupational and four spiritual divisions (*varṇas* and *āśramas*). The members of the four *varṇas* are the *brāhmaṇas* (intellectuals and priests), the *kṣatriyas* (administrators and soldiers), the *vaiśyas* (farmers and businessmen), and the *śūdras* (laborers and artisans). The members of the four *āśramas* are the *brahmacārīs* (celibate students), *gṛhasthas* (married people), *vānaprasthas* (retired people), and *sannyāsīs* (renunciants).
Vedas—the hymns of knowledge revealed by the Lord himself at the beginning of creation.
Vedic—pertaining to the culture in which the *Vedas* and related scriptures guide all aspects of human life.
Viṣṇu—any form of the Personality of Godhead (see "Godhead"); the forms the Lord manifests to create and sustain the material world.
Vṛndāvana—the transcendental abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa, mirrored on earth as the town in India where Kṛṣṇa appeared five thousand years ago.

How to Pray to Śrīmatī RĀDHĀRĀṆĪ

In an exemplary prayer, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī shows us how to pray to Rādhā and what to ask for.

by Dvija-maṇi Dāsa

ye me bhakta-janāḥ pārtha
na me bhaktāś ca te janāḥ
mad-bhaktānāṁ ca ye bhaktās
te me bhaktatamā matāḥ

O Arjuna, son of Pṛthā, those who claim to be my devotees directly are not really my devotees. Rather, those who are the devotees of my devotees, I consider to be my greatest devotees.

Ādi Purāṇa (quoted in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā* 11.28)

KṚṢṆA CONSCIOUSNESS is a social process. As with the relationships of this world, deeply loving Kṛṣṇa entails loving those He loves, His devotees. And as Kṛṣṇa's statement above makes clear, to become His devotee we must not approach Him directly but through these devotees. In this mood Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura in the late nineteenth century wrote a song in glorification of Vaiṣṇavas, the devotees of Lord Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa. He sang, *kṛṣna se tomāra, kṛṣṇa dite pāra, tomāra śakati āche:* "That Kṛṣṇa is yours; you can give Kṛṣṇa. Such power is yours."

Of all of Kṛṣṇa's devotees, Rādhā is supremely exalted. She is no ordinary mortal like you or I, but is the embodiment of His personal pleasure potency. Although distinct and able to engage in loving devotional service to Kṛṣṇa, Rādhā is in fact identical to Him. He is the Supreme God; She, the Supreme Goddess. Kṛṣṇa is the Lord of Vṛndāvana, the spiritual world, and Rādhā is its queen. Thus She is known as Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, "the illustrious Queen Rādhā." Together Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa constitute the complete Absolute Truth.

Rādhā's devotion to Kṛṣṇa reaches the pinnacle of perfection. As finite souls we cannot even aspire to love and serve Kṛṣṇa as perfectly as She does; our perfection lies in assisting Her in Her loving service to Kṛṣṇa. The power of Her love is indeed so intense that it subjugates Kṛṣṇa. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.32.22) records Kṛṣṇa's response to the loving service of Rādhā and Her companions: *na pāraye 'haṁ . . . sva-sādhu-kṛtyaṁ . . . vaḥ:* "I am not able to repay you."

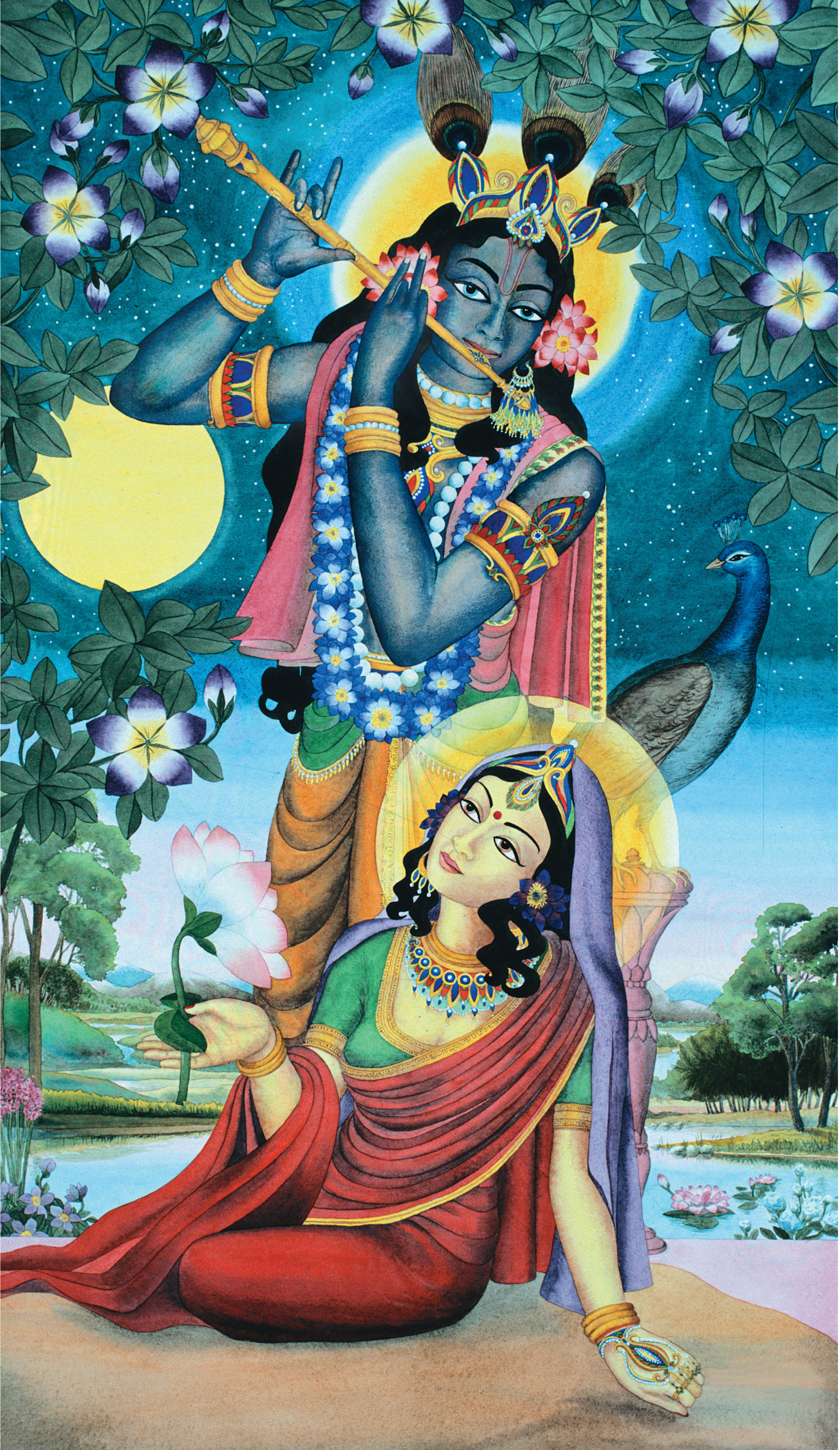
Kṛṣṇa is thus submissive to Her wishes, and as Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "Once She recommends . . . a devotee to Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Lord at once accepts the devotee's admittance into His association." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.3.23, Purport) So it is not surprising that Rūpa Gosvāmī, a great Vaiṣṇava theologian and poet of the sixteenth century, composed a number of poems as prayers to Rādhā.

A Unique Prayer

The titles given to most of Rūpa Gosvāmī's poems, such as *Śrī-rādhāṣṭaka* (literally, *A Poem of Eight Stanzas About the Illustrious Rādhā*) are simple and descriptive. One title, however, stands out as noteworthy: *Prārthanā-paddhati* (*The Guide for Petitioning*) [See sidebar, p. 17]. In composing this poem, he not only expressed his own personal devotional sentiments, but provided a perfect example of spiritual petitionary prayer for us to follow. The prayer is exemplary in many ways: in its structure, its form, its mood, and the object prayed for.

Prārthanā-paddhati is short and sweet, only seven stanzas long. Although "short and sweet" is something of a cliché, in the context of petitionary prayers it is of profound importance, for when requesting charity or favors, brevity is often

Painting by Gustaf



Among all of Lord Kṛṣṇa's devotees, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is the most dear to Him, and we can win His favor by pleasing Her with our prayers.

equated with brusqueness. But in Rūpa Gosvāmī's poem, the appeal is not made until the fifth verse, a little more than halfway through the poem. Before this, Rūpa Gosvāmī poetically praises Rādhā, buttering Her up, so to speak, before presenting his petition. Devotees praying to the Lord or His associates for mercy should follow Rūpa Gosvāmī's example, beginning their prayer with words of praise and glorification.

The first four stanzas of *Prārthanā-paddhati* consist simply of eleven poetic descriptions of Rādhā, each syntactically in apposition to the direct object of the fifth stanza. The effect of this structure, though difficult to reconstruct in English translation, leaves the person hearing this prayer in suspense as to the basic idea being conveyed; the reader's attention is left simply to contemplate these wondrous descriptions of Rādhā. For example, the first two stanzas read:

śuddha-gāṅgeya-gaurāṅgīṁ
kuraṅgī-laṅgimekṣaṇām
jita-koṭīndu-bimbāsyām
ambudāmbara-saṁvṛtām

navīna-vallavī-vṛnda-
dhammillottaṁsa-mallikām
divya-ratnādy-alaṅkāra-
sevyamāna-tanu-śriyam

"With limbs more golden than pure gold, with beautiful eyes like those of a doe, and with lips that conquer millions of moons; covered with garments that are like rain clouds. An ornamental jasmine atop a braided bun amongst the young cowherd girls; whose bodily beauty is enhanced by celestial gems and other ornaments."

These verses also show the ideal form of a prayer, that is, a form filled with poetic embellishments (*alaṅkāras*). Sanskrit literary critics divide *alaṅkāras* into two main divisions: embellishments of sound (*śabdālaṅkāras*) and embellishments of meaning (*arthālaṅkāras*). (See *Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā* 16.72–86.) Although content is more important than form, the Lord and His devotees recognize the devotion behind trying to offer prayers full of poetic beauty. When used to describe a mundane object, such poetic devices simply result in flowery language; but when the beauty of poetry is used to portray the transcendental beauty of the Lord and His devotees, its purpose is true.

Here we see in particular the *śabdālaṅkāra* of alliteration (*anuprāsa*) with repeated *ṅg* in the first half of the first verse, repeated *mb* in the second half, and repeated *ll* in the first half of the second verse, with less obvious examples throughout the poem. These lines are also filled with *arthālaṅkāras* in the form of various types of metaphors and similes that are both poetically and theologically significant.

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For instance, the first line speaks of Rādhā as having limbs more golden than pure gold. This particular type of metaphor, wherein the subject of the comparison, here Rādhā's limbs, is not equated with but said to surpass the object of comparison, here gold, is called in Sanskrit *vyatireka*, distinction. A standard example might say that a woman's face is more beautiful than a lotus flower. Here however, there seems to be an incoherency in saying that Rādhā's limbs are more golden than gold itself. After all, is the quality of "goldenness" not defined as an essential property of gold? To resolve this, we must remember that we are dealing here with the Supreme Goddess Herself. Rādhā's golden effulgence is the original goldenness. The material element we know of as gold simply borrows its name from Rādhā, due to manifesting some miniscule portion of Her beautiful golden radiance. Rather than being an impossible exaggeration, Rūpa Gosvāmī's words express profound spiritual truth.

Likewise, the description that Rādhā is "covered with garments that are like rain clouds" suggests something much deeper than what it seems on the surface to be saying. In its primary sense, this is simply a description of the gray-blue color of Rādhā's clothing. However, the word for a rain cloud, *ambuda*, literally "a giver of water," here suggests a hidden meaning. Rather than giving forth ordinary water, Rādhārāṇī's beauty brings about *rasa,* specifically *prema-bhakti-rasa.* The word *rasa* literally means juice, but in a poetic context refers to a transcendent emotion, and *prema-bhakti-rasa* means the emotion found in loving devotional service for the Lord.

In this world, there is a disconnectedness between ourselves and our bodies, what to speak of our clothes. The self is an eternal spirit soul, while the body is temporary and mortal. The physical beauty of the body has little to do with the nature of our true self: often people with hearts of gold have faces full of acne, and the most beautiful models can be self-centered and cruel-hearted. But for Kṛṣṇa and His associates in the spiritual world, this is not the case. Kṛṣṇa's body and those of His devotees in the spiritual world are not temporary material bodies, but spiritual bodies identical to their very selves. Thus, Rādhā's beauty is not some fortunate accident of nature, but a direct expression of the purity of Her love for Kṛṣṇa. This extends even to Her clothing. The beauty of Her garments reveals the intensity of Her love and thus evokes this *prema-bhakti-rasa.*

Again, the description of Rādhā as "the ornamental jasmine atop a braided bun amongst the young cowherd girls," perhaps sounding curious to those not familiar with Sanskrit poetry, has various levels of meaning. Most simply, it is equivalent to the metaphor describing someone as the "crest jewel" within any particular category. Just as the most excellent jewel a king owns will be placed in the crest of his crown and thus physically occupy the highest position among all of the king's jewelry, so a person described as the "crest jewel" within a given group is understood to be the most excellent and the topmost within that group. Here, by this parallel metaphor, Rādhā is described as the topmost of all the cowherd women in Vṛndāvana, the rural setting where Kṛṣṇa, by His own sweet will, chooses to manifest His loving relationships with His devotees. But rather than use a metaphor suited to the pomp of royalty, Rādhārāṇī, the queen of Vṛndāvana, is compared to a jasmine flower, highlighting through its imagery Her sweetness, beauty, and feminine delicacy.

Prārthanā-paddhati

by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī

1

śuddha-gāṅgeya-gaurāṅgīṁ
kuraṅgī-laṅgimekṣaṇām
jita-koṭīndu-bimbāsyām
ambudāmbara-saṁvṛtām

With limbs more golden than pure gold, with beautiful eyes like those of a doe, and with lips that conquer millions of moons; covered with garments that are like rain clouds.

2

navīna-vallavī-vṛnda-
dhammillottaṁsa-mallikām
divya-ratnādy-alaṅkāra-
sevyamāna-tanu-śriyam

An ornamental jasmine atop a braided bun amongst the young cowherd girls; whose bodily beauty is enhanced by celestial gems and other ornaments.

3

vidagdha-maṇḍala-guruṁ
guṇa-gaurava-maṇḍitām
abhipreṣṭha-vayasyābhir
aṣṭābhir abhiveṣṭitām

The leader of a coterie of cunning ladies; decorated with virtue and dignity and surrounded by eight beloved peers.

4

cañcalāpāṅga-bhaṅgena
vyākulī-kṛta-keśavām
goṣṭhendra-suta-jīvātu-
ramya-bimbādharāmṛtām

By whom Kṛṣṇa is bewildered through a stream of glances from the corners of flickering eyes; the nectar of whose lovely red lips is the elixir of life for Kṛṣṇa, the son of the king of Vraja.

5

tvām asau yācate natvā
viluṭhan yamunā-taṭe
kākubhir vyākula-svānto
jano vṛndāvaneśvari

Bowing down, this person beseeches You with a stammering, pitiable cry, O queen of Vṛndāvana, rolling on the ground on the bank of the Yamunā River with a troubled heart.

6

kṛtāgaske 'py ayogye 'pi
jane 'smin kumatāv api
dāsya-dāna-pradānasya
lavam apy upapādaya

Though he may be an unfit offender with a crooked mind, please bestow a small fragment of the valuable gift of Your service to this person.

7

yuktas tvayā jano naiva
duḥkhito 'yam upekṣitum
kṛpā-dyoti-dravac-citta-
navanītāsi yat sadā

Such a sorrowful person is not fit to be neglected by You, for Your mind, like fresh butter, always melts from the warmth of Your compassion.

A Prayer to the Praised

The fifth stanza resolves the syntactic tension of the first four stanzas; it finally becomes clear that the prayer addresses the person being described, and the petition is made.

tvām asau yācate natvā
viluṭhan yamunā-taṭe
kākubhir vyākula-svānto
jano vṛndāvaneśvari

"Bowing down, this person beseeches You with a stammering, pitiable cry, O Queen of Vṛndāvana, rolling on the ground on the bank of the Yamunā River with a troubled heart."

The following verse identifies the

nature of the request, and we see here the exemplary nature of this prayer in its most important aspect. For what Rūpa Gosvāmī prays for is nothing other than the opportunity of devotional service to Rādhā. The petition is pure-hearted, not aiming at any selfish gratification. The mood in which this prayer is made is also to be emulated. Rūpa Gosvāmī exhibits deep humility, a meekness hinted at in the previous stanza by his referring to himself in the third person. Here he admits himself to be unqualified for the benediction he requests.

kṛtāgaske ’py ayogye ’pi
jane ’smin kumatāv api
dāsya-dāna-pradānasya
lavam apy upapādaya

“Though he may be an unfit offender with a crooked mind, please bestow a small fragment of the valuable gift of Your service to this person.”

His humble words here take the form of an *arthālaṅkāra* called *viśeṣokti,* a statement of difference. It refers to a poetic statement in which one sees a mismatch between cause and effect. Here, the expected effect of his humility and self-acknowledged disqualification would be for him not to make such a bold request. And yet he does.

A Model Prayer for Us

The final stanza resolves this apparent incongruity. He shows one final exemplary quality in his prayer: persistence. In this last stanza, Rūpa Gosvāmī makes an argument to persuade Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī to bestow Her mercy, regardless. But formal logic does not fit well with poetry. Thus, Rūpa Gosvāmī employs the *arthālaṅkāra* called *kāvya-liṅga*, poetic cause. All the elements of a causal formula are present in his words, but are hidden within his poetry.

yuktas tvayā jano naiva
duḥkhito ’yam upekṣitum
kṛpā-dyoti-dravac-citta-
navanītāsi yat sadā

“Such a sorrowful person is not fit to be neglected by You, for Your mind, like fresh butter, always melts from the warmth of Your compassion.”

Commenting on this stanza, Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, the great Vaiṣṇava theologian and poet of the eighteenth century, explains the logical argument implicit herein: “Since compassion (*kṛpā*) is the desire to take away the sorrow of others and I am full of sorrow, I am not fit to be abandoned.”

Rūpa Gosvāmī has provided the perfect model for prayer. If we learn to pray to the Lord and His devotees with the same structure, beginning with words of praise; if we exhibit the same humble mood and the same persistence; and if we request the same most exalted of all benedictions, then our prayers will certainly be heard and answered. And even if we come nowhere close to the poetic sophistication of Rūpa Gosvāmī’s prayer, the Lord will look with favor on even the humblest attempt to compose our prayers with a beauty that befits their object.

But Rūpa Gosvāmī has left the world more than a mere formula; he has also left us exquisite poetry. However feeble our own attempts at composing such prayers may be, we can always simply meditate deeply on the beauty of Rūpa Gosvāmī’s descriptions of the Supreme Goddess, Rādhārāṇī, and by offering Her this prayer wholeheartedly, we can be confident that She will look upon us with compassion. ✺

Dvija-maṇi Dāsa, a disciple of Ravīndra Svarūpa Dāsa, is a Benjamin Franklin Doctoral Fellow in Sanskrit at the University of Pennsylvania. He lives with his family at the Philadelphia ISKCON temple and is working with his guru on a translation, with commentary, of Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī’s Manaḥ-śikṣā.

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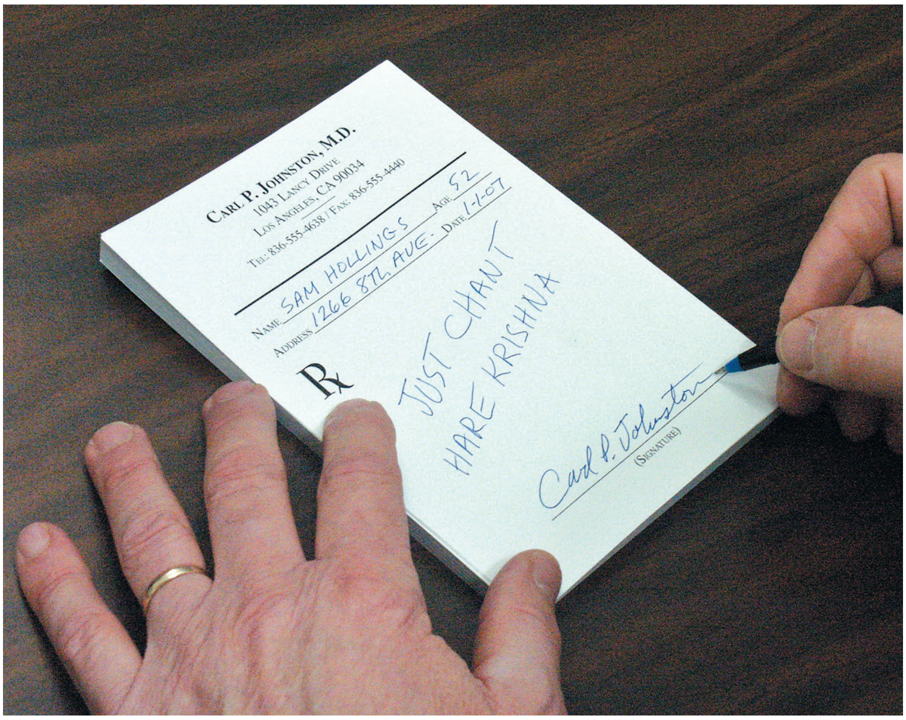
by Pañca Tattva Dāsa



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JUST CHANT
HARE KRISHNA

Carl P. Johnston
(SIGNATURE)

EVERYONE IS anxiously searching for happiness, and many types of authorities give advice on how to procure it. From infomercials to self-help gurus, total satisfaction is advertised as only a purchase or a seminar away. And the people peddling pop psychology or the latest dietary fad are not the only ones doling out advice; friends, doctors, lawyers, family members, and everyone else we turn to for help has something to say.

A few years after I joined the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, I was in Detroit, Michigan, with a party of devotees performing *harināma-saṅkīrtana,* the congregational chanting of Lord Kṛṣṇa's holy names. It was the Fourth of July, Independence Day, and people crowded the riverfront park, listening to music and waiting for the fireworks display over the Detroit River. As we crossed Hart Plaza chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, a man burst out of the crowd of onlookers.

"Steve!" he cried. "How's it going!"

It was Scott Carlson, an old friend of mine. Pretty soon his younger brother, Greg, a few drinks under his belt and a little off-balance, weaved his way over and listened as I told Scott what I'd been doing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I watched Greg out of the corner of my eye as he sized me up. I must have looked quite strange to him, dressed in a dhoti and kurta, my head shaved except for a tuft of hair at the back. After a few minutes, Greg decided he had heard enough.

"Listen, Steve," he slurred, "all you really need is a good chicken dinner. Come on over anytime and I'll do the cookin'. We'll have a beer and talk about old times."

I could have explained that I only eat food prepared and offered to God, Kṛṣṇa, with love and devotion, that it must be food that Kṛṣṇa likes to eat, such as fruits, vegetables, grains, and milk products, but the chanting party was moving on and I didn't want to leave Scott and Greg in an argumentative mood. So I politely declined the meal, gave them a small book about Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and invited them to the temple for the free Sunday love feast.

The spiritual master does a thorough diagnosis, not stopping at a physical symptom or even a mental one.

I can only imagine what Greg was thinking when he saw me. My appearance on Hart Plaza was so different from the way he remembered me. We used to share an apartment, and I was familiar with Greg's daily routine: eating fast food, going to bars, looking for any opportunity to enjoy with a woman, and working hard to pay for everything. Although he was drunk, he could still understand that my life had taken a different turn, so he offered me a taste of my old ways to snap me out of it. Fortunately, I didn't accept Greg's prescription. In fact, I was already following a prescription from someone actually qualified to help me—a bona fide spiritual master. What Greg saw as abnormal was, for me, a state of spiritual recovery.

The Wrong Diagnosis

A year ago, I was in a great deal of pain, and a urologist gave a diagnosis of prostatitis. He prescribed a long regimen of powerful antibiotics, which brought little relief and a host of unwanted side effects. Then, some months ago, I had a terrible attack of pain in my back and abdomen and went to the hospital.

The emergency room doctor observed my symptoms, asked some questions, and said, "Kidney stones. We'll set you up for a CT scan, but you have kidney stones."

She was right. When I told her that I had had similar painful episodes a year before but the urologist hadn't thought them important, she just shook her head in disbelief.

Eventually I passed a kidney stone, and my body returned to its normal state of health. If the urologist I saw to begin with had carefully studied my symptoms, I might have avoided living with pain for so long.

In some ways, the urologist reminded me of my old friend Greg. He meant well. He thought he understood my condition, and he prescribed treatment accordingly, but because his diagnosis was mistaken, he couldn't do any real good for me. In fact, he could only prolong or increase my suffering. Only when a doctor who could understand the symptoms and correctly identify the disease evaluated me was I set on the path to well being.

Sometimes the Kṛṣṇa conscious spiritual master is described as an expert physician. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in *Teachings of Lord Caitanya:*

> Diseased and conditioned, the living entity transmigrates throughout the universe. Sometimes he is situated in the upper planetary system and sometimes in the lower system. In this way he leads his diseased life. His disease can be cured only when he meets and follows the expert physician, the bona fide spiritual master. When the conditioned soul faithfully follows the instructions of a bona fide spiritual master, his material disease is cured, he is promoted to the liberated stage, and he again attains to the devotional service of Kṛṣṇa and goes back home, back to Kṛṣṇa.

The spiritual master does a thorough diagnosis, not stopping at a physical symptom or even a mental one, because he or she knows the identity of our underlying illness—forgetfulness of our relationship with Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The primary symptom is that we are trying to enjoy this material world, and in the process we've become conditioned by the three modes of material nature: goodness, passion, and ignorance. Our search for happiness propels us through various species of life, but because we are contaminated by lust, anger, greed, illusion, envy, and fear, and harassed by material miseries, we cannot understand what will give us ultimate satisfaction and repose.

Recognizing this, the spiritual master instructs us about the nature of our disease, the method to cure it, and the nature of spiritual life free from disease. If we carefully follow the spiritual master's instructions, we can attain eternal, blissful life with Kṛṣṇa in the spiritual world.

Unlike the guru's prescription, any other advice in this material world can only yield some temporary benefit, at best. That's not to say that we take guidance only from the spiritual master; after all, when we're physically ill, our immediate need is to see a doctor. But if we want to make an ultimate solution to the problems of material life, we have to approach a spiritual master. No one else can help us.

Pañca Tattva Dāsa joined ISKCON in 1978. He lives with his wife and daughter in St. Louis, Missouri.

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PRONUNCIATION: ha-ray, krish-na, ra-ma (rhymes with “drama”)

Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa
Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare
Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma
Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare

Pictured: 2007 Tampa Rathayātrā / Photo by Yamarāja Dāsa

CHANT HARE KRISHNA!

BOOK SECTION: ŚRĪMAD-BHĀGAVATAM

Referred to as "the ripe fruit of the tree of Vedic literature," *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the most complete and authoritative exposition of Vedic knowledge. Five thousand years ago the great sage Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa composed this *purāṇa,* or history, to explain the essence of spiritual knowledge. Here we present *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in serialized form, with the original Sanskrit text, transliteration, word meanings, translation, and purports by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

LORD VIṢṆU'S DETACHMENT

Sages and other exalted persons continue to glorify Lord Viṣṇu, pointing out His unique qualities.

CANTO 4: CHAPTER 7

ऋषय ऊचुः
34 अनन्वितं ते भगवन् विचेष्टितं
यदात्मना चरसि हि कर्म नाज्यसे
विभूतये यत उपसेदुरीश्वरीं
न मन्यते स्वयमनुवर्ततीं भवान्

ṛṣaya ūcuḥ
ananvitaṁ te bhagavan viceṣṭitaṁ
yad ātmanā carasi hi karma nājyase
vibhūtaye yata upasedur īśvarīṁ
na manyate svayam anuvartatīṁ bhavān

ṛṣayaḥ—the sages; *ūcuḥ*—prayed; *ananvitam*—wonderful; *te*—Your; *bhagavan*—O possessor of all opulences; *viceṣṭitam*—activities; *yat*—which; *ātmanā*—by Your potencies; *carasi*—You execute; *hi*—certainly; *karma*—to such activities; *na ajyase*—You are not attached; *vibhūtaye*—for her mercy; *yataḥ*—from whom; *upaseduḥ*—worshiped; *īśvarīm*—Lakṣmī, the goddess of fortune; *na manyate*—are not attached; *svayam*—Yourself; *anuvartatīm*—to Your obedient servant (Lakṣmī); *bhavān*—Your Lordship.

The sages prayed: Dear Lord, Your activities are most wonderful, and although You do everything by Your different potencies, You are not at all attached to such activities. ① You are not even attached to the goddess of fortune, who is worshiped by the great demigods like Brahmā, who pray to achieve her mercy.

PURPORT: In *Bhagavad-gītā* it is said that the Lord has no desire to achieve any result from His wonderful activities, nor has He any need to perform them. But still, in order to give an example to people in general, He sometimes acts, and those activities are very wonderful.

He is not attached to anything. *Na māṁ karmāṇi limpanti:* although He acts very wonderfully, He is not at all attached to anything (Bg. 4.14). He is self-sufficient. The example is given here that the goddess of fortune, Lakṣmī, is always engaged in the service of the Lord, but still He is not attached to her. Even great demigods like Brahmā worship the goddess of fortune in order to win her favor, but although the Lord is worshiped by many hundreds and thousands of goddesses of fortune, He is not at all attached to any one of them. This distinction concerning

(1) What example of the Lord's detachment do the sages give?

the exalted transcendental position of the Lord is specifically mentioned by the great sages; He is not like the ordinary living entity, who is attached to the results of pious activities.

सिद्धा ऊचुः
35 अयं त्वत्कथामृष्टपीयूषनद्यां
मनोवारणः क्लेशदावाग्निदग्धः
तृषार्तोऽवगाढो न सस्मार दावं
न निष्क्रामति ब्रह्मसम्पन्नवन्नः

siddhā ūcuḥ
ayaṁ tvat-kathā-mṛṣṭa-pīyūṣa-nadyāṁ
mano-vāraṇaḥ kleśa-dāvāgni-dagdhaḥ
tṛṣārto 'vagāḍho na sasmāra dāvaṁ
na niṣkrāmati brahma-sampannavan naḥ

siddhāḥ—the Siddhas; *ūcuḥ*—prayed; *ayam*—this; *tvat-kathā*—Your pastimes; *mṛṣṭa*—pure; *pīyūṣa*—of nectar; *nadyām*—in the river; *manaḥ*—of the mind; *vāraṇaḥ*—the elephant; *kleśa*—sufferings; *dāva-agni*—by the forest fire; *dagdhaḥ*—burned; *tṛṣā*—thirst; *ārtaḥ*—afflicted; *avagāḍhaḥ*—being immersed; *na sasmāra*—does not remember; *dāvam*—the forest fire or the miseries; *na niṣkrāmati*—not come out; *brahma*—the Absolute; *sampanna-vat*—like having merged; *naḥ*—our.

The Siddhas prayed: Like an elephant that has suffered in a forest fire but can forget all its troubles by entering a river, our minds, O Lord, always merge in the nectarean river of Your transcendental pastimes, and they desire never to leave such transcendental bliss, which is as good as the pleasure of merging in the Absolute.

PURPORT: This statement is from the Siddhas, the inhabitants of Siddhaloka, ② where the eight kinds of material perfection are complete. ③ The residents of Siddhaloka have full control in the eight kinds of yogic perfection, but from their statement it appears that they are pure devotees. They always merge in the nectarean river of hearing of the pastimes of the Lord. Hearing of the pastimes of the Lord is called *kṛṣṇa-kathā.* ④ Similarly, there is a statement by Prahlāda Mahārāja that those who are always merged in the ocean of the nectar of describing the Lord's pastimes are liberated and have no fear of the material condition of life.

(2) What is the special feature of Siddhaloka?
(3) What do the residents of Siddhaloka say to indicate that they are pure devotees?
(4) What does Prahlāda Mahārāja say about those who are always merged in the ocean of the nectar of describing the Lord's pastimes?
(5) To what do the Siddhas compare an elephant who has suffered in a forest fire and who enters into a river for relief?

The Siddhas say that the mind of an ordinary person is full of anxieties. ⑤ The example is given of the elephant who has suffered in a forest fire and who enters into a river for relief. If persons who are suffering in the forest fire of this material existence will only enter into the nectarean river of the description of the pastimes of the Lord, they will forget all the troubles of the miserable material existence.

The Siddhas do not care for fruitive activities, such as performing sacrifices and achieving the good results. They simply merge in the transcendental discussions of the pastimes of the Lord. That makes them completely happy, without care for pious or impious activities. For those who are always in Kṛṣṇa consciousness there is no need to perform any kind of pious or impious sacrifices or activities. Kṛṣṇa consciousness is itself complete, for it includes all the processes praised in the Vedic scriptures.

यजमान्युवाच
36 स्वागतं ते प्रसीदेश तुभ्यं नमः
श्रीनिवास श्रिया कान्तया त्राहि नः
त्वामृतेऽधीश नाङ्गैर्मखः शोभते
शीर्षहीनः कबन्धो यथा पुरुषः

yajamāny uvāca
svāgataṁ te prasīdeśa tubhyaṁ namaḥ
śrīnivāsa śriyā kāntayā trāhi naḥ
tvām ṛte 'dhīśa nāṅgair makhaḥ śobhate
śīrṣa-hīnaḥ ka-bandho yathā puruṣaḥ

yajamānī—the wife of Dakṣa; *uvāca*—prayed; *su-āgatam*—auspicious appearance; *te*—Your; *prasīda*—become pleased; *īśa*—my dear Lord; *tubhyam*—unto You; *namaḥ*—respectful obeisances; *śrīnivāsa*—O abode of the goddess of fortune; *śriyā*—with Lakṣmī; *kāntayā*—Your wife; *trāhi*—protect; *naḥ*—us; *tvām*—You; *ṛte*—without; *adhīśa*—O supreme controller; *na*—not; *aṅgaiḥ*—with bodily limbs; *makhaḥ*—the sacrificial arena; *śobhate*—is beautiful; *śīrṣa-hīnaḥ*—without the head; *ka-bandhaḥ*—possessed of only a body; *yathā*—as; *puruṣaḥ*—a person.

The wife of Dakṣa prayed as follows: My dear Lord, it is very fortunate that You have appeared in this arena of sacrifice. I offer my respectful obeisances unto You, and I request that You be pleased on this occasion. The sacrificial arena is not beautiful without You, just as a body is not beautiful without the head.

PURPORT: ⑥ Another name of Lord Viṣṇu is Yajñeśvara. In *Bhagavad-gītā* it is said that all activities should be performed as Viṣṇu-yajña, for the pleasure of Lord Viṣṇu. Unless we please Him, whatever we do is the cause of our bondage in the material world. This is confirmed herein by the wife of Dakṣa: "Without Your presence, the grandeur of this sacrificial ceremony is useless, just as a body without the head, however decorated it may be, is useless."

The comparison is equally applicable to the social body. Material civilization is very proud of being advanced, but it is actually the useless trunk of a body without a head. Without Kṛṣṇa consciousness, without an understanding of Viṣṇu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, any advancement in a civilization, no matter how sophisticated, is of no value. There is a statement in the *Hari-bhakti-sudhodaya* (3.11):

bhagavad-bhakti-hīnasya
jātiḥ śāstraṁ japas tapaḥ
aprāṇasyaiva dehasya
maṇḍanaṁ loka-rañjanam

The purport is that sometimes when a friend or relative dies, especially among lower class men, the dead body is decorated. Dressed and ornamented, the body is taken in procession. That sort of decoration of the dead body has no actual value because the life force is already gone. ⑦ Similarly, any aristocracy, any social prestige, or any advancement of material civilization without Kṛṣṇa consciousness is as good as the decoration of a dead body.

⑧ The name of the wife of Dakṣa was Prasūti, and she was the daughter of Svāyambhuva Manu. Her sister, Devahūti, was married to Kardama Muni, and Kapiladeva, the Personality of Godhead, became Devahūti's son. Prasūti, then, was the aunt of Lord Viṣṇu. She was asking the favor of Lord Viṣṇu in an affectionate mode; since she was His aunt, she sought some special favor.

Also significant in this verse is that the Lord is praised with the goddess of fortune. Wherever Lord Viṣṇu is worshiped, naturally there is the favor of the goddess of fortune.

⑨ Lord Viṣṇu is addressed as *amṛta,* transcendental. The demigods, including Brahmā and Lord Śiva, were produced after the creation, but Lord Viṣṇu existed before the creation. He is addressed, therefore, as *amṛta.*

Lord Viṣṇu is worshiped with His internal energy by the Vaiṣṇavas. Prasūti, the wife of Dakṣa, implored the Lord to turn the priests into Vaiṣṇavas instead of simply fruitive workers performing sacrifices for some material benefits.

लोकपाला ऊचुः
37 दृष्टः किं नो दृग्भिरसद्ग्रहैस्त्वं
प्रत्यग्द्रष्टा दृश्यते येन विश्वम्
माया ह्येषा भवदीया हि भूमन्
यस्त्वं षष्ठः पञ्चभिर्भासि भूतैः

lokapālā ūcuḥ
dṛṣṭaḥ kiṁ no dṛgbhir asad-grahais tvaṁ
pratyag-draṣṭā dṛśyate yena viśvam
māyā hy eṣā bhavadīyā hi bhūman
yas tvaṁ ṣaṣṭhaḥ pañcabhir bhāsi bhūtaiḥ

loka-pālāḥ—the governors of the different planets; *ūcuḥ*—said; *dṛṣṭaḥ*—seen; *kim*—whether; *naḥ*—by us; *dṛgbhiḥ*—by the material senses; *asat-grahaiḥ*—revealing the cosmic manifestation; *tvam*—You; *pratyak-draṣṭā*—inner witness; *dṛśyate*—is seen; *yena*—by whom; *viśvam*—the universe; *māyā*—material world; *hi*—because; *eṣā*—this; *bhavadīyā*—Your; *hi*—certainly; *bhūman*—O possessor of the universe; *yaḥ*—because; *tvam*—You; *ṣaṣṭhaḥ*—the sixth; *pañcabhiḥ*—with the five; *bhāsi*—appear; *bhūtaiḥ*—with the elements.

The governors of various planets spoke as follows: Dear Lord, we believe only in our direct perception, but under the circumstances we do not know whether we have actually seen You with our material senses. By our material senses we can simply perceive the cosmic manifestation, but You are beyond the five elements. You are the sixth. We see You, therefore, as a creation of the material world.

PURPORT: The governors of the various planets are certainly materially opulent and very puffed up. Such persons are unable to understand the transcendental, eternal form of the Lord. ⑩ In the *Brahma-saṁhitā* it is stated that only persons who have anointed their eyes with love of Godhead can see the Personality of Godhead in every step of their activities. Also, in the prayers of Kuntī (*Bhāg.* 1.8.26) it is stated that only those who are *akiñcana-gocaram,* who are not materially puffed up, can see the Supreme Personality of Godhead; others are bewildered and cannot even think of the Absolute Truth.

(6) Why is Viṣṇu called Yajñeśvara?
(7) When is the advancement of civilization like the decoration of a dead body?
(8) How is Prasūti, Dakṣa's wife, the aunt of Lord Viṣṇu?
(9) Why is Lord Viṣṇu addressed as *amṛta,* transcendental?
(10) According to the *Brahma-saṁhitā,* what is the qualification for seeing God?

योगेश्वरा ऊचुः
38 प्रेयान्न तेऽन्योऽस्त्यमुतस्त्वयि प्रभो
विश्वात्मनीक्षेन्न पृथग्य आत्मनः
अथापि भक्त्येशतयोपधावता-
मनन्यवृत्त्यानुगृहाण वत्सल

yogeśvarā ūcuḥ
preyān na te ’nyo ’sty amutas tvayi prabho
viśvātmanīkṣen na pṛthag ya ātmanaḥ
athāpi bhaktyeśa tayopadhāvatām
ananya-vṛttyānugṛhāṇa vatsala

yoga-īśvarāḥ—the great mystics; *ūcuḥ*—said; *preyān*—very dear; *na*—not; *te*—of You; *anyaḥ*—another; *asti*—there is; *amutaḥ*—from that; *tvayi*—in You; *prabho*—dear Lord; *viśva-ātmani*—in the Supersoul of all living entities; *īkṣet*—see; *na*—not; *pṛthak*—different; *yaḥ*—who; *ātmanaḥ*—the living entities; *atha api*—so much more; *bhaktyā*—with devotion; *īśa*—O Lord; *tayā*—with it; *upadhāvatām*—of those who worship; *ananya-vṛttyā*—unfailing; *anugṛhāṇa*—favor; *vatsala*—O favorable Lord.

The great mystics said: Dear Lord, persons who see You as nondifferent from themselves, knowing that You are the Supersoul of all living entities, are certainly very, very dear to You. You are very favorable toward those who engage in devotional service, accepting You as the Lord and themselves as the servants. By Your mercy, You are always inclined in their favor.

PURPORT: It is indicated in this verse that the monists and the great mystics know the Supreme Personality of Godhead as one. This oneness is not the misunderstanding that a living entity is equal in every respect to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This monism is based on pure knowledge as described and confirmed in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (7.17): *priyo hi jñānino ’tyartham ahaṁ sa ca mama priyaḥ.* The Lord says that those who are advanced in transcendental knowledge and know the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness are very dear to Him, and He also is very dear to them.

Those who are actually in perfect knowledge of the science of God know that the living entities are superior energy of the Supreme Lord. This is stated in *Bhagavad-gītā,* Seventh Chapter: the material energy is inferior, and the living entities are superior energy. Energy and the energetic are nondifferent; therefore, energies possess the same quality as the energetic. Persons who are in full knowledge of the Personality of Godhead, analyzing His different energies and knowing their own constitutional position, are certainly very, very dear to the Lord. Persons, however, who may not even be conversant with knowledge of the Supreme Personality but who always think of the Lord with love and faith, feeling that He is great and that they are His parts and parcels, ever His servitors, are even more favored by Him.

(11) Why is the Lord famous as *bhakta-vatsala*?

The particular significance of this verse is that the Lord is addressed as *vatsala. Vatsala* means “always favorably disposed.” The Lord’s name is *bhakta-vatsala.* ⑪ The Lord is famous as *bhakta-vatsala,* which means that He is always favorably inclined to the devotees, whereas He is never addressed anywhere in the Vedic literature as *jñānī-vatsala.*

39 जगदुद्भवस्थितिलयेषु दैवतो
बहुभिद्यमानगुणयात्ममायया
रचितात्मभेदमतये स्वसंस्थया
विनिवर्तितभ्रमगुणात्मने नमः

jagad-udbhava-sthiti-layeṣu daivato
bahu-bhidyamāna-guṇayātma-māyayā
racitātma-bheda-mataye sva-saṁsthayā
vinivartita-bhrama-guṇātmane namaḥ

jagat—the material world; *udbhava*—creation; *sthiti*—maintenance; *layeṣu*—in annihilation; *daivataḥ*—destiny; *bahu*—many; *bhidyamāna*—being variegated; *guṇayā*—by material qualities; *ātma-māyayā*—by His material energy; *racita*—produced; *ātma*—in the living entities; *bheda-mataye*—who produced different inclinations; *sva-saṁsthayā*—by His internal potency; *vinivartita*—caused to stop; *bhrama*—interaction; *guṇa*—of material modes; *ātmane*—unto Him in His personal form; *namaḥ*—obeisances.

We offer our respectful obeisances unto the Supreme, who has created varieties of manifestations and put them under the spell of the three qualities of the material world in order to create, maintain, and annihilate them. He Himself is not under the control of the external energy; in His personal feature He is completely devoid of the variegated manifestation of material qualities, and He is under no illusion of false identification.

[*Continued in the next issue.*]

ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA SPEAKS OUT

Dream Life and Reality

This conversation between His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda and a disciple took place in Los Angeles in January of 1974.

Disciple: In your books you say this world is like a dream.
Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. It is a dream.
Disciple: How is it a dream?
Śrīla Prabhupāda: For example, last night you had some dream, but now it has no value. It is gone. And again, tonight when you sleep you'll dream and forget all these things. You won't remember, when you are dreaming tonight, "I've got my house; I've got my wife." You'll forget it all. So all of this is a dream.
Disciple: Is it true, or is it not true?
Śrīla Prabhupāda: How could it be true? At night you forget it. Do you remember when you sleep that you've got your wife and you're sleeping on a bed? When you have gone some three thousand miles away and seen something totally different in your dream, do you remember that you've got a place to reside in?
Disciple: No.
Śrīla Prabhupāda: So this is a dream. Tonight, what you are seeing now will become only a dream, just as what you saw last night—now you know it was only a dream. So both are dreams. You are simply a visitor, that's all. You are seeing this dream and that dream. You, the spirit soul, are factual. But your material body and the material surroundings you are seeing—this is a dream.
Disciple: But I have the impression that this experience is true and my dream is not true. What is the difference—
Śrīla Prabhupāda: No. This experience is all untrue! How could it be true? If it were true, how could you forget it at night? How could you forget it, if it were true? At night do you remember all this?
Disciple: No. I don't remember.
Śrīla Prabhupāda: Then how could it be true? Just as you don't remember the

dream you saw last night and so you call it a "dream," similarly this experience—because you forget it at night—this is also a dream. . . .

Disciple: But I have the impression—

Śrīla Prabhupāda: This is a daydream; that is a night dream. That's all. When you dream at night, then you perceive that as being real. Yes. You think that is real. It is a dream, but you are crying, "There is a tiger! Tiger! Tiger!" Where is the tiger? But you are seeing it as fact—a tiger. "I'm being killed by a tiger." But where is the tiger? Or you dream you are embracing some beautiful girl. Where is that beautiful girl? But actually it is happening.

Disciple: It is happening?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: In one sense it is happening, because there is discharge of semen. Nocturnal emission. But where is that girl? Is it not a dream? But similarly, this so-called real-life experience is also a dream. You are getting the impression of factuality, but it is a dream. Therefore it is called *māyā-sukhāya,* illusory happiness. Your nighttime happiness and your daytime happiness are the same thing. At night you are dreaming you are embracing a nice beautiful girl, and there is no such thing. Similarly, in the daytime also, whatever "advancement" you are making—this is also like that. *Māyā-sukhāya:* you are dreaming, "This process will make me happy" or "That process will make me happy," but the whole process is only a dream. You are taking this daydream as reality because the duration is long. At night when you dream, the duration is just half an hour. But this daydream lasts for twelve hours or more. That is the difference. This is a twelve-hour dream, and that is a half-hour dream—but actually both of them are dreams. Because one is a twelve-hour dream, you are accepting it as real. That is called illusion.

Disciple: Illusion.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. You are making a distinction between an animal and yourself, but you are forgetting that just as the animal will die, you will also die. So where is your advancement? Will you remain forever? You will also die. So where is your advancement over an animal? That is stated in the Vedic literatures. *Āhāra-nidrā-bhaya-maithunaṁ ca/ samānam etat paśubhir narāṇām:* this business—eating, sleeping, sex, and defending—this is also the animal's business, and you are doing the same. So how are you distinct from an animal? You will die; the animal will die. But if you say, "I will die after one hundred years, and this ant will die after one hour," that does not mean that you are in reality. It is a question of time.

Or take this huge universe—it will all be destroyed. As your body will be destroyed, this universe will also be destroyed. Annihilation. Dissolution. Nature's way—the whole thing will be dissolved. Therefore, it is a dream. It is a long-duration dream, that's all. Nothing else. But the advantage of having this human body is that in this dream you can realize the reality—God. That is the advantage. So if you don't take advantage of this dream, then you are missing everything.

Disciple: So I'm half-asleep?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. This is the situation. Therefore, the Vedic literature says, *uttiṣṭha:* "Get up! Get up! Get up!" *Jāgrata:* "Become awakened!" *Prāpya varān nibodhata:* "Now you've got the opportunity, use it." *Tamasi mā jyotir gama:* "Don't stay in darkness, come to the light." These are Vedic injunctions. And we are teaching the same thing. "Reality is here—Kṛṣṇa. Don't remain in this dark place. Come to this higher consciousness." ❀

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HOW I CAME TO KṚṢṆA CONSCIOUSNESS

A LATE START AFTER LESSONS LEARNED

“I want my son to associate with Kṛṣṇa and His devotees from the very beginning of his life, as I was unable to do.”

by Purnendu Baroowa

During a ceremony at the ISKCON temple in Pune, India, a priest offers the first grains to Hrishikesh, son of the author and his wife, Monjeeta.

I DID NOT KNOW the concept of spiritual realization, nor did I believe in the existence of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. To me there were many gods, The *Bhagavad-gītā* was simply a holy book, the contents of which were unknown to me. And I had never heard of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. I did not believe in the truth of transmigration of souls into different bodies based on our activities in the current birth. I believed that whatever activities one undertakes in this birth end with this life. “One should enjoy life to the fullest” was my mantra, and I used to claim things associated with me as “mine.” In other words, I was confined in a shell of my own world—a world of complete illusion.

I offer my humble obeisances to their Lordships Rādhā-Mādhava, to Rukmiṇī-Kṛṣṇa, and to His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, without whose mercy my life would have been useless, without any genuine cause.

In 1973 I was born in ignorance and illusion in Guwahati, Assam. Throughout my life my parents (Sri Ganesh Chandra Baroowa and Smt. Sakuntala Baroowa) taught me to be good and not harm others. But they did not direct me to the path of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, as they themselves were deluded by Kṛṣṇa's material energy.

I had two sisters, Pallavi and Parinita, both of whom passed on. Pallavi was quite young when she died. By Kṛṣṇa's will—and mistreatment by doctors—she was never very healthy. Parinita, however, died in a car accident at a stage when most parents dream of their daughter's marriage and a secure future, a stage supposed to be the better half of one's life. But who can dream beyond Kṛṣṇa's will? Who can have a vision that sees beyond the Supreme's? These two souls have most likely transmigrated into new bodies as the result of their karma.

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My family did not understand the meaning of God even though we were strict followers of God. To us there were many gods because we worshiped the demigods as God. We believed strongly in astrology, and we believed that pleasing the demigods would change our luck, bring peace, provide us with money, and fulfill our never-ending materialistic desires. We did not realize that the demigods are all under the order of Kṛṣṇa, God Himself.

We were heavily into meat-eating (goat, chicken, eggs, and fish), and there were times when we couldn't relish meals without meat. We would go to meat shops desiring the best part of the hanged, butchered carcass. We vied with others for the best portion of the dead body that suited our taste buds: the legs, the thighs, the liver, the rib cage, the heart—even the intestines. We planned the spices to be added even before going to the slaughterhouse. Such was the extent of the sense gratification we were into, along with others of this material world. We did not realize the trauma and pain we would undergo if we or our children were butchered and hanged, smeared with blood.

In other words, one can say we were completely drowned in an ocean of nescience.

Suffering from Karma

The law of karma has taken its toll on us. Perhaps because of our pleasure in eating meat, the curse of the poor souls of those butchered creatures has found us. Perhaps Kṛṣṇa has stood before our daughters/sisters as death to teach us the pain one feels when his kin is snatched away mercilessly. As state laws punishes criminals, the law of Kṛṣṇa punishes the fallen. We may think, "Why us? We have not killed the animals; we have only bought the meat of creatures killed by somebody else." But just as the law of the state holds responsible not just the person who commits the act but anyone else involved, meting out justice according to each person's

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culpability, the law of Kṛṣṇa dictates the magnitude of punishment based on our activities in the material world. In proportion to our misdeeds, Kṛṣṇa stands before us as death, as permanent disability, as the death of our loved ones, and as other punishments. Under state law the guilty may sometimes escape punishment. But there can be no escape from Kṛṣṇa's law.

Because of Pallavi's long illness, we were able to console ourselves upon her demise. We thought that maybe God wanted her back, as she was a pious soul. We did not realize that Kṛṣṇa would give us a chance to rectify our activities and start chanting the holy names of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. We did not realize that He would give us a chance to devote all our activities to Him, to serve Him, and to surrender unto Him completely, without any reservations. We did not know of the transmigration of soul into different bodies based on one's activities. We did not realize that we should use our human form for spiritual realization to enable us to go back to Godhead, where we all belong. We thought that life was a one-sided affair wherein we all go to heaven or hell as decided by God Himself. We thought that eating meat was part of the cycle of survival for human beings, as designed by God. We did not realize that the human body is not a graveyard where dead bodies of animals can be dumped.

Inspiration from the Lord

After the passing of Parinita in a car accident, life started getting back on track for me with my official responsibilities amid hectic life in Mumbai. My parents were still in Guwahati, trying desperately to overcome the trauma of Parinita's unexpected demise. It seemed their life now had no direction and no objective. They were in a state of complete imbalance. But Kṛṣṇa balances one's life as He decides. When Kṛṣṇa closes one door, He opens another. My parents did not realize that their lives were heading toward a divine direction, one that would allow them to associate with God and His beloved devotees.

One lazy summer afternoon my mother was lying on her bed while my father was in the TV room scrolling through various channels. He was not enjoying any program but was only trying to divert his mind from his grief. Suddenly my mother got up as if there was someone calling her. She didn't know who, but she felt an inspiration—one that would change the entire journey of her life in the material world. She walked up to my father and asked him to accompany her to the ISKCON temple in Guwahati. My father was reluctant, but my mother got ready and left the house in a flash. She had never done anything like that before. She reached the temple when the evening *ārati* was in full swing, with enthusiastic devotees singing and dancing before Śrī Śrī Rukmiṇī-Kṛṣṇa. When the *ārati* ended, she turned around and saw my father standing behind her. He had also taken a part in the *ārati.* This is the mercy of the Lord. Throughout their lives they never felt the urge to go to the temple on their own. But how could they refuse when God Himself was calling them to come and worship Him, serve Him, and lead their lives for a good cause?

This was the turning point in their lives. Since that day they have been going to the ISKCON temple. They take part in festivals, sing in *kīrtanas,* chanting sixteen rounds on beads daily, and devote everything to Kṛṣṇa's service. By the grace of Kṛṣṇa they have visited the pilgrimage centers of Māyāpur and Vṛndāvana several times. Now vegetarians, they relish only food cooked in the house and offered to Kṛṣṇa. By the grace of Kṛṣṇa they are slowly and steadily progressing in spiritual life, leaving many unwanted activities in this material world far behind. Due to their unflinching efforts in striving toward Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the Lord has bestowed His unlimited mercy on these souls. By His grace they were initiated by His Holiness Jayapatāka Swami Mahārāja in November 2006 at the ISKCON temple in Guwahati. Their names are now Gaṇāśraya Govinda Dāsa and Sevā Mūrti Rādhā Devī Dāsī.

My Spiritual Life Begins

I continued my life as it had been before the death of my sisters. One

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day my mother came to my residence in Pune and gave me a bag containing *japa mālā* beads and asked me to start chanting. I was reluctant, as I was unsure of my commitment to the chanting. I thought it to be a waste of my time and energy and a hindrance to my material responsibilities. But I wanted to please her. I never imagined I would associate with Kṛṣṇa through my mother.

I started chanting reluctantly, beginning with one round of 108 beads daily. For many days I continued with one round of chanting. My parents did not pressure me but only advised me to never decrease my number of rounds. Now I chant sixteen rounds daily. I do not feel the same urge to eat meat that I felt in the past. The *prasādam* my mother cooks at our house in Pune and offers to Kṛṣṇa is very tasty and nothing like oily, over-spiced nonvegetarian dishes. I have also started reading the books written and translated by Śrīla Prabhupāda.

I was touched when I read Śrīla Prabhupāda's biography. How could someone in this dirty material world single-handedly take up the responsibility to spread God consciousness, undergoing so much pain and effort in the process—and for people he didn't even know? He could have settled down happily with his family in Calcutta, enjoying material fruits and ending his life peacefully without getting involved fully in the spiritual process. Inspired by Prabhupāda's life, and by the grace of Their Lordship Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, I am striving to progress on the path of spiritual consciousness.

Raising My Son In Kṛṣṇa Consciousness

My wife's name is Monjeeta, and we have an infant son named Hrishikesh. I want my son to associate with Kṛṣṇa and His devotees from the very beginning of his life, as I was unable to do. There can be no time frame set for these associations. Some of my friends and relatives insist that one should take up spiritual activities at a later stage of life, after fulfilling one's material responsibilities toward his wife, children, and so on. According to them spiritual activities should be a support system for old age, when one can think of God and pass the remaining days of life peacefully. But material and spiritual responsibilities are not mutually exclusive. Kṛṣṇa urges spiritual activities, but He does not recommend running away from our existing responsibilities. He didn't tell Arjuna to give up his duties as a *kṣatriya.*

Based on the teachings of the *Bhagavad-gītā* spoken by God himself, I believe that my son is a soul who has transmigrated and appeared in my life by the blessings of Kṛṣṇa. I know that Kṛṣṇa wants me to show him a direction by which he can progress back to Godhead to render eternal service unto the lotus feet of the Lord. I have started taking him to the ISKCON temple in Pune, where we take part in the *kīrtanas.* My wife feeds him *prasādam* offered to the deities in the temple whenever we visit.

I know that I will face great resistance from material forces in trying to develop my son's Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But I believe that Kṛṣṇa will help me fulfill my honest yearnings. I know that Kṛṣṇa is always with me. I do not want to lament what my parents are now regretting—that they did not guide me in tasting the nectar of devotion from a very early stage of my life. I know that if Kṛṣṇa wants I can initiate *bhakti* as the binding force between my son and me. I am praying to Śrīla Prabhupāda to bless me with the association of a spiritual master under whose divine guidance my son and I can progress toward spiritual realization amid extremely strong material forces.

I again offer my humble obeisances to Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava, Śrī Rukmiṇī-Kṛṣṇa, and Śrīla Prabhupāda. Without their mercy I would never be where I am today.

Calendar

This calendar is calculated for Māyāpur, West Bengal, India. The dates, derived from a lunar calendar, may vary by one day for other locations. For the exact dates for your area, go to www.krishna.com/calendar.

Because the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement comes in disciplic line from Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the calendar includes not only dates relevant to all followers of the Vedic tradition but also dates relating to Lord Caitanya's associates and prominent spiritual masters in His disciplic succession.

Month of Madhusūdana

(April 3–May 2)

MAY

1—Nṛsiṁha Caturdaśī, appearance anniversary of Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva, Lord Kṛṣṇa's half-man, half-lion incarnation. Fasting till dusk, followed by feasting.

2—Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Śrīnivāsa Ācārya, a follower of the six Gosvāmīs. Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Mādhavendra Purī, the spiritual master of Lord Caitanya's spiritual master (Īśvara Purī).

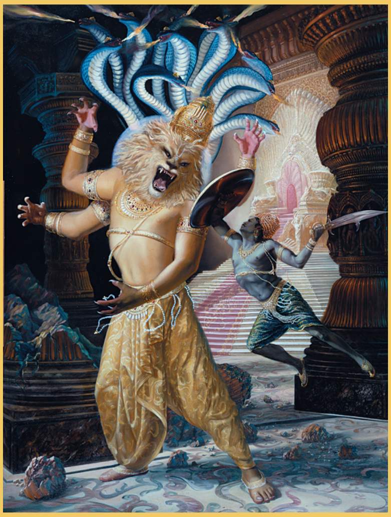
Month of Trivikrama

(May 3–May 16 [continues after the month of Puruṣottama-adhikā])

7—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Rāmānanda Rāya, an intimate associate of Lord Caitanya.

13—Aparā Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

14—Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Vṛndāvana Dāsa Ṭhākura, author of *Śrī Caitanya-Bhāgavata,* a biography on Lord Caitanya.



Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva

Month of Puruṣottama-adhikā

(May 17–June 15)

27—Padminī Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

JUNE

11—Paramā Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

Month of Trivikrama

(continued: June 16–30)

25—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, a prominent spiritual master in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya* (disciplic succession), and the author of *Govinda-bhāṣya,* an important commentary on *Vedānta-sūtra.* Appearance anniversary of Śrīmatī Gaṅgāmātā Gosvāminī, a prominent woman spiritual master in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya.*

26—Pāṇḍava Nirjalā Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

Month of Vāmana

(July 1–30)

JULY

1—Disappearance of Śyāmānanda Paṇḍita, one of the principal followers of the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana.

10—Disappearance anniversary of Śrī Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita, one of the principal associates of Lord Caitanya.

11—Yoginī Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

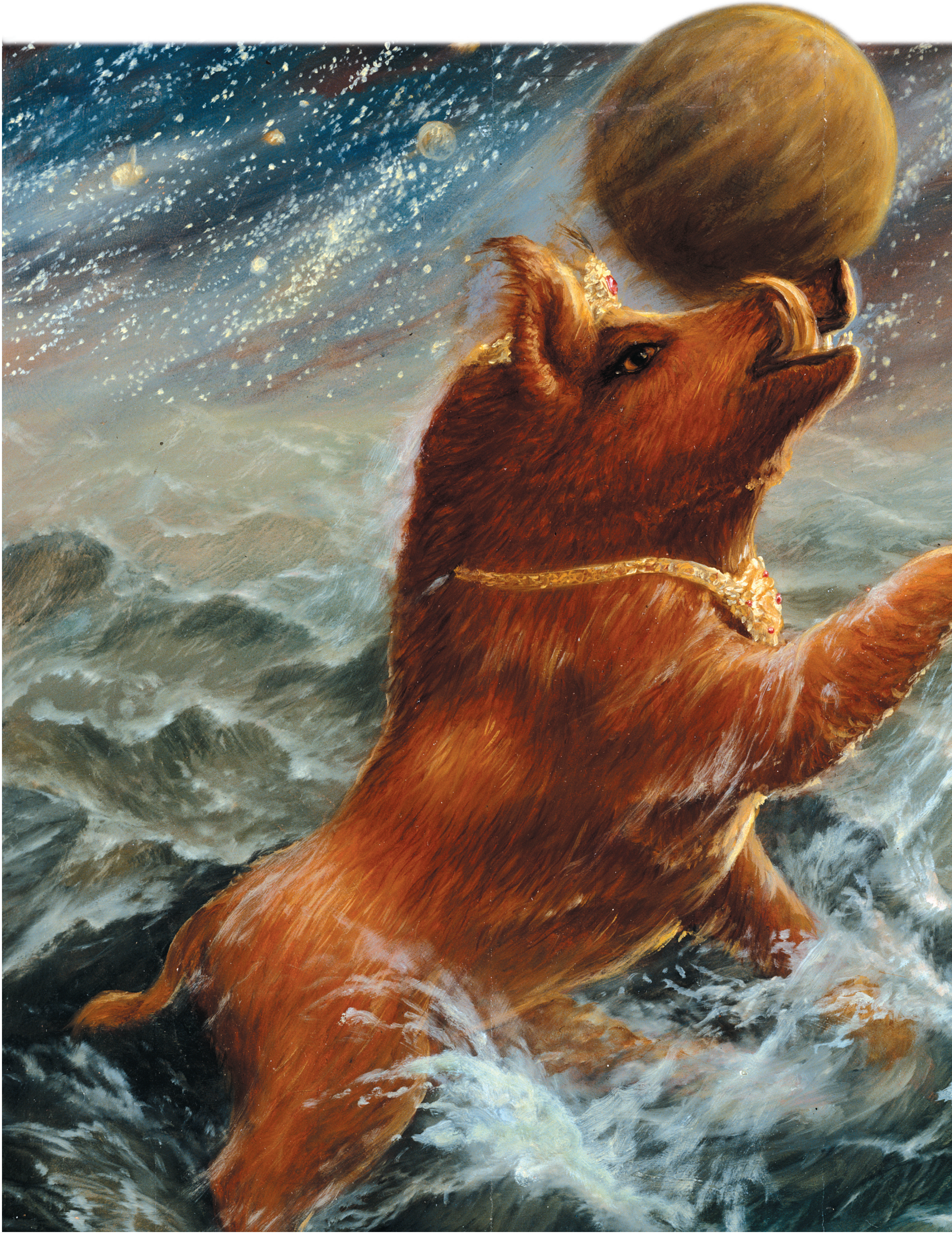
14—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Gadādhara Paṇḍita, one of the principal associates of Lord Caitanya. Also, disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. Fasting till noon, then feasting.

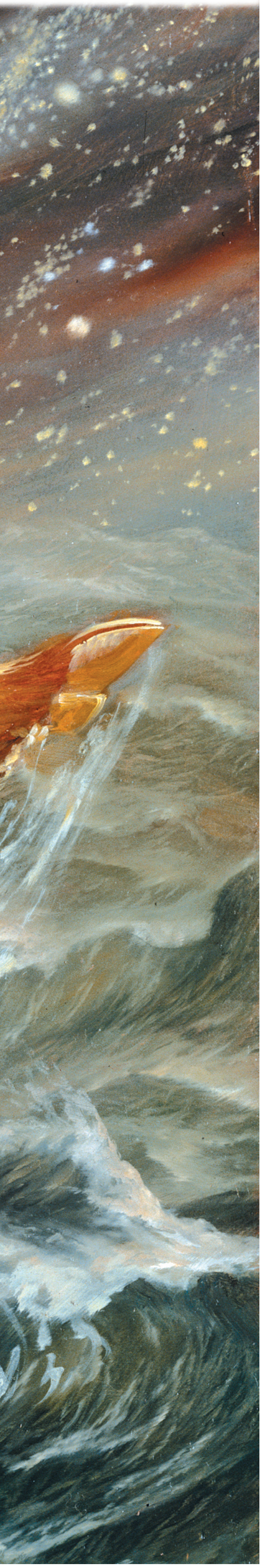
15—Guṇḍicā-mārjana. Festival of cleansing the Gundicha temple in Jagannatha Puri, India.

16—Lord Jagannātha's Ratha-yātrā in Jagannatha Puri. Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Svarūpa Dāmodara and Śrīla Śivānanda Sena, intimate associates of Lord Caitanya.

26—Śayanā Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

30—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī, one of the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana. First month of Cāturmāsya begins (fasting from green leafy vegetables).





Painting by Rāmadāsa Abhirāma Dāsa

KṚṢṆA'S INCARNATIONS

Lord Varāha Rescues the Earth

When God assumes the form of a boar, He remains God—pure, transcendental, and the captivator of His devotees' hearts.

by Aja Govinda Dāsa

GREEK MYTHOLOGY depicts the Titan Atlas, bearer of the globe, as always struggling under his burden. Yet the Supreme Lord in His form of a giant boar hoisted Mother Earth on His tusks as pleasurably as an elephant picks up a lotus. This form of the Lord appeared twice to rescue Mother Earth, once at the beginning of creation when she was lying helplessly in the depths of the Garbhodaka Ocean (which fills half the universe), and the second time when mining by the powerful demon Hiraṇyākṣa so disturbed her equilibrium that she fell again into the Garbhodaka Ocean. Thus the Lord is celebrated as the husband and protector of Mother Earth, and together they are worshiped as Bhūmi-Vāraha.

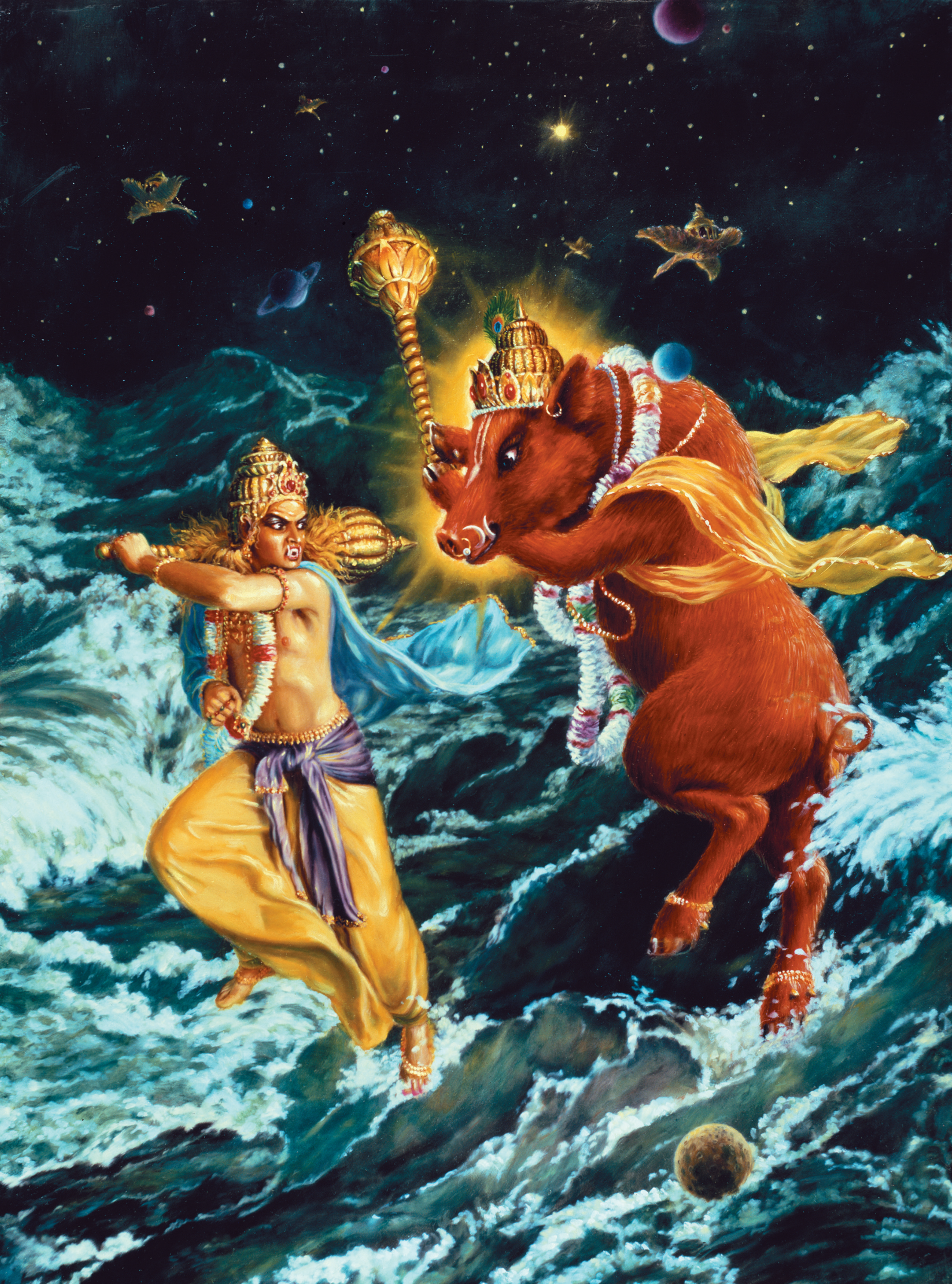
Śveta-Varāha: The White Boar Incarnation

At the beginning of creation, Lord Brahmā, creator of the universe, instructed his son Svayambhuva Manu, the primeval father of mankind, to generate human progeny and lead his subjects on the path of devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. But Manu saw that the earth, the abode for human beings, was submerged in the Garbhodaka Ocean, so he asked his father to retrieve it. While Lord Brahmā pondered the task, a tiny boar came out from his nostril. Before Brahmā could realize it, the boar expanded His body in the sky to the size of a great elephant. At first perplexed by the astounding boar, Brahmā then understood Him to be an incarnation of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The tumultuous grunt of the boar incarnation delighted Brahmā, who felt assured that the Lord would solve all his problems.

Even though the Lord appears in a boar form to rescue Mother Earth from the mire of the Garbhodaka Ocean, He remains immaculate and eternally transcendental to all material contamination. In fact, Lord Varāha, the boar incarnation, is known to be the personified *Vedas.* Lord Kṛṣṇa's breath is the original source of all the *Vedas.* As the first recipient of Vedic knowledge, Brahmā inhaled the Lord's breath. And because Lord Varāha came out with Brahmā's breath, Lord Varāha is the personified *Vedas.*

After expanding in size, Lord Varāha flew into the sky, slashing His tail and illuminating the entire universe with His glance, the source of all light.

Lord Varāha sniffed for the earth with His powerful sense of smell. On finding her lying on the Garbhodaka seabed, He lifted her up on His mighty tusks. The sages who witnessed this feat glorified the Lord as *mahīdhraḥ*, "sustainer of the earth." The word can also mean "great mountain," which is appropriate here because Lord



Varāha's infallible body, upon which the earth rested, resembled a mountain crest decorated by a cloud. The sages described the whole scene as *vibhramaḥ*, which means "beauty" as well as "illusion." It was no doubt beautiful, but why illusory? Because although the Lord lifted the earth on His tusks, He did so without effort, just as He effortlessly supports myriad universes.

Emerging from the water, Lord Varāha shook His body, sprinkling the sages of the highest planetary systems. The sages felt purified because the water had touched the sacred body of the Lord, whose lotus feet produce the pristine Ganges.

The twelfth-century Vaiṣṇava poet Jayadeva lauds Śrī Varāha: "O Keśava! O Lord of the universe! O Lord Hari, who have assumed the form of a boar! All glories to You! The earth, which had become immersed in the Garbhodaka Ocean at the bottom of the universe, sits fixed upon the tip of Your tusk like a spot upon the moon."

Rakta-Varāha: The Red Boar Incarnation

The second boar incarnation appeared to slay Hiraṇyākṣa, the archetypal Daitya, or atheistic offspring of Diti. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* describes how Diti once persuaded her husband, Kaśyapa Muni, to have union with her at dusk, a time reserved for worshiping the Supreme Lord. Even though Diti and Kaśyapa were strict followers of religious principles, their transgression led to the birth of twin atheists from Diti's womb. During her pregnancy, the sun was obscured, and when she gave birth to the twins, earthquakes and comets foretold inauspiciousness, dark clouds rained filth, and cows yielded blood from their udders.

Baffled by the upheaval, the demigods asked Brahmā for help, and he related to them the history leading up to the twin demons' birth. When Brahmā's four sons known as the Kumāras once went to see Lord Viṣṇu in His imperishable abode, Vaikuṇṭha, two gatekeepers, Jaya and Vijaya, barred their entry. Astonished by the gatekeepers' offensive behavior, the Kumāras condemned them to be born in the material world. Though haughty, the doormen were devotees of the Lord nonetheless, and to protect them from further damnation, He arrived on the scene to pacify the sages.

The Vedic scriptures tell us that the Lord arranged the whole episode so that He could satisfy His desire to fight with powerful adversaries. Therefore, He left the sages' curse intact, and Jaya and Vijaya were born to Diti as Hiraṇyakaśipu and Hiraṇyākṣa. To please his brother Hiraṇyakaśipu, whose name denotes infatuation with riches and sensual enjoyment, Hiraṇyākṣa defeated the prominent rulers of the universe and stole their wealth. In fulfilling his name, Hiraṇyākṣa, or "he whose eye is always looking for gold," mined the earth's buried riches and upset her equilibrium, causing her to fall into the Garbhodaka Ocean.

Hiraṇyākṣa bolted upon the Lord and attacked with his mace, but the Lord leisurely eluded the strike.

One day Hiraṇyākṣa plunged into the Garbhodaka and swam to Varuṇa to fight him. Varuṇa, lord of the watery worlds, refused to fight but instead advised him to fight with Lord Viṣṇu, who would put his pride to sleep forever.

Just then, Lord Varāha rescued Mother Earth from the Garbhodaka Ocean. Seeing the planet earth resting on Lord Varāha's tusks, the outraged Hiraṇyākṣa scolded Him.

"O amphibious beast, this earth planet is our property. You will not be able to leave here alive if You do not return this planet to us. Today I shall smash Your skull with my mace!"

Lord Varāha emerged from the water just as a bull elephant might emerge from a pond when assaulted by an alligator.

The demon pursued the Lord, yelling at him, "You coward, are You not humiliated to run away from Your opponent?"

The omnipotent Lord set Mother Earth afloat, having imparted to her His supreme potency.

"O boastful Hiraṇyākṣa," the Lord said. "I am certainly a wild boar wishing to slay dogs like you. Give up your bombast and conquer Me if you can."

Thus challenged, Hiraṇyākṣa seethed like a cobra. He bolted upon the Lord and attacked with his mace, but the Lord leisurely eluded the strike. Hiraṇyākṣa and the Lord beat each other repeatedly, but each of them expertly dodged the opponent's moves. The brutal brawl drew blood from both. Every wound increased the wrath of the irate adversaries, who appeared like bulls contending for a cow.

Fearing the demon's power, which grew as evening approached, Brahmā implored Lord Varāha to kill him. The Lord then aimed His mace at the demon's chin, but he wrenched the mace from the Lord's hand. Varāha then summoned His indestructible Sudarśana disc, seeing which the demon flung his mace and fiery trident at the Lord. Like a raptor seizing its prey, the Lord intercepted the mace, and He shredded the trident with His razor-sharp Sudarśana disc. His weapons destroyed, Hiraṇyākṣa beat on Lord Varāha's expansive chest. Though

(*please turn to page 58*)

Painting by Parīkṣit Dāsa

In your own

What's the best Kṛṣṇa conscious lesson you've

I am a schoolteacher.

Years ago when I taught in Leicester, England, I was tidying my classroom at the end of the day. The door was open, and suddenly a female blackbird flew in noisily, immediately followed by a male blackbird. The female flew towards a closed window, swerved at the last moment, and then flew out of the classroom door. The male was going so fast that he didn't see the window and didn't swerve in time. He hit the glass and dropped dead, his neck broken. I was stunned by this event and thought, "The male bird was so intent on sex that he didn't see death approaching." I resolved to become more determined in my pursuit of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and to chant better rounds, because, as the blackbird taught me, death can come to claim us at any moment. And when it does, we must be able to think of Kṛṣṇa.

Kṛṣṇa-Bhajana Dāsa
Alachua, Florida

Since I started visiting

the Hare Kṛṣṇa temple, I have been keeping a small online blog about my spiritual questions, musings, experiences, and difficulties. I use it to try and connect with other devotees to learn from them. I constantly struggle with breaking free from *māyā,* and it has been a great tool in helping me work things out and getting advice and suggested readings from other devotees.

One of my nondevotee friends is very interested in my progress and asked if she could read about it. I saw no problem with this and added her to my blog. She doesn't understand all of it, but she does respect it, as she has also been trying to be more spiritual in her own life.

One night I was depressed because I was alone. There was no one around to talk to or be with, and my boyfriend was out. Feeling very sad and distressed, I suddenly had the instinct to write a post to my spiritual blog about how I was feeling.

My friend posted this one sentence in response: "You are not alone; Kṛṣṇa is with you."

To this day I don't know if she was joking, being sarcastic, or really meant for me to realize that. But since that day, whenever I feel lonely or sad I try to remember this fact thanks to her.

Stephanie Freitas
Brooklyn, New York

Priyavrata Dāsa (center), director of Food for Life Global, with Indradyumna Swami, helps with prasādam *distribution after the 2004 tsunami in Sri Lanka.*

words . . .

learned from someone else?

Pentip photographer: Andrea Leone | Agency: Dreamstime.com

In the year 2000,

my Guru Mahārāja, His Holiness Lokanāth Swami, was holding a seven-day *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Kathā* in Nagpur, India. As the last day fell on Janmāṣṭamī, the organizers had a little boy dressed as Kṛṣṇa come onto the stage. My Guru Mahārāja immediately bowed down and placed the little boy's hands on his head.

What we saw was a little boy dressed as Kṛṣṇa, but Guru Mahārāja saw only Kṛṣṇa.

This incident really made an impact on my mind. I pray that the day will come when I too can always see Kṛṣṇa.

Kṛṣṇa Kumārī Dāsī
Sydney, Australia

One fateful morning,

while my husband and I were out of town, our daughter Jyoti was caught in a terrible accident and received third degree burns. As she lay in the burn ward at a government hospital, I ran back and forth, taking care of her with little help. I had to manage all her dressings and bring her *prasādam* instead of the awful hospital food. The only solace was the occasional visits of devotees who came to see Jyoti.

When time permitted, I read *The Nectar of Devotion* to her, but strangely, the nurses would object to it. Soon I began hiding it under Jyoti's pillow as soon as I heard them coming. A month passed in this way, and the absence of a devotional atmosphere became unbearable. But when I asked the doctor when they would discharge Jyoti, he answered gravely, "These wounds don't heal fast, and negligence would be fatal. The patient will have to stay for at least one more month."

Devastated, I longed for *darśana* of the deities, and for temple programs, which I missed dearly. I began to lose hope.

Finally, our counselor, Braja Dāsī, saw my anguish and asked, "Do you not pray to your spiritual master for mercy?"

Her words struck me. Immediately, I sat down, and through my tears, prayed fervently to my spiritual master Rādhānātha Swami that I wanted to get out of this hospital and spend more time in devotional service.

The next day, to my surprise, the doctor informed me that Jyoti had been discharged.

Kauśalyā Dāsī
Mumbai, India

I've always noticed my husband

closing his eyes and forgetting the world whenever he sipped water. I would always wonder what he was thinking about. Once I asked him what made him so ecstatic when he sipped water. He said that he was thanking the Lord for having created something colorless, odorless, and yet so tasty that it had no substitutes. He was so thankful to the Lord for water and the way it quenched his thirst. At the time, I just moved on, agreeing that water had no substitute and that yes, water is God's best creation.

A few days later, however, I happened to read that in the *Bhagavad-gītā* the Lord declares that He is the taste of water.

Bang! It hit me. My husband was meditating on the Lord when I had thought it was just about water. I flip the beads, I chant, and I read. But how well have I learned to be Kṛṣṇa conscious? It struck me that my husband had learned to be Kṛṣṇa conscious in everyday activity. He is a spiritual teacher to me in one way, and I respect him for having taught me the highest philosophy in a simple manner.

Srividya Balaji
Parsippany, New Jersey

After the Asian tsunami of 2004

I traveled to Sri Lanka with Priyavrata Dāsa, director of Food For Life Global, to assist with food relief upon its devastated shores. FFL Global was serving 30,000 meals every day.

And this was not a once off project for my friend Priyavrata Dāsa. Day in and day out he serves the Lord in the most desperate places on this war-torn, disaster-ridden, and unfortunate planet by bringing *prasādam* to those who need it most.

I would like to thank him for being a constant inspiration to me, and for teaching me that a devotee is tireless and serves the Lord in action.

James Cook
Dallas, Texas

HERE'S THE NEXT QUESTION:

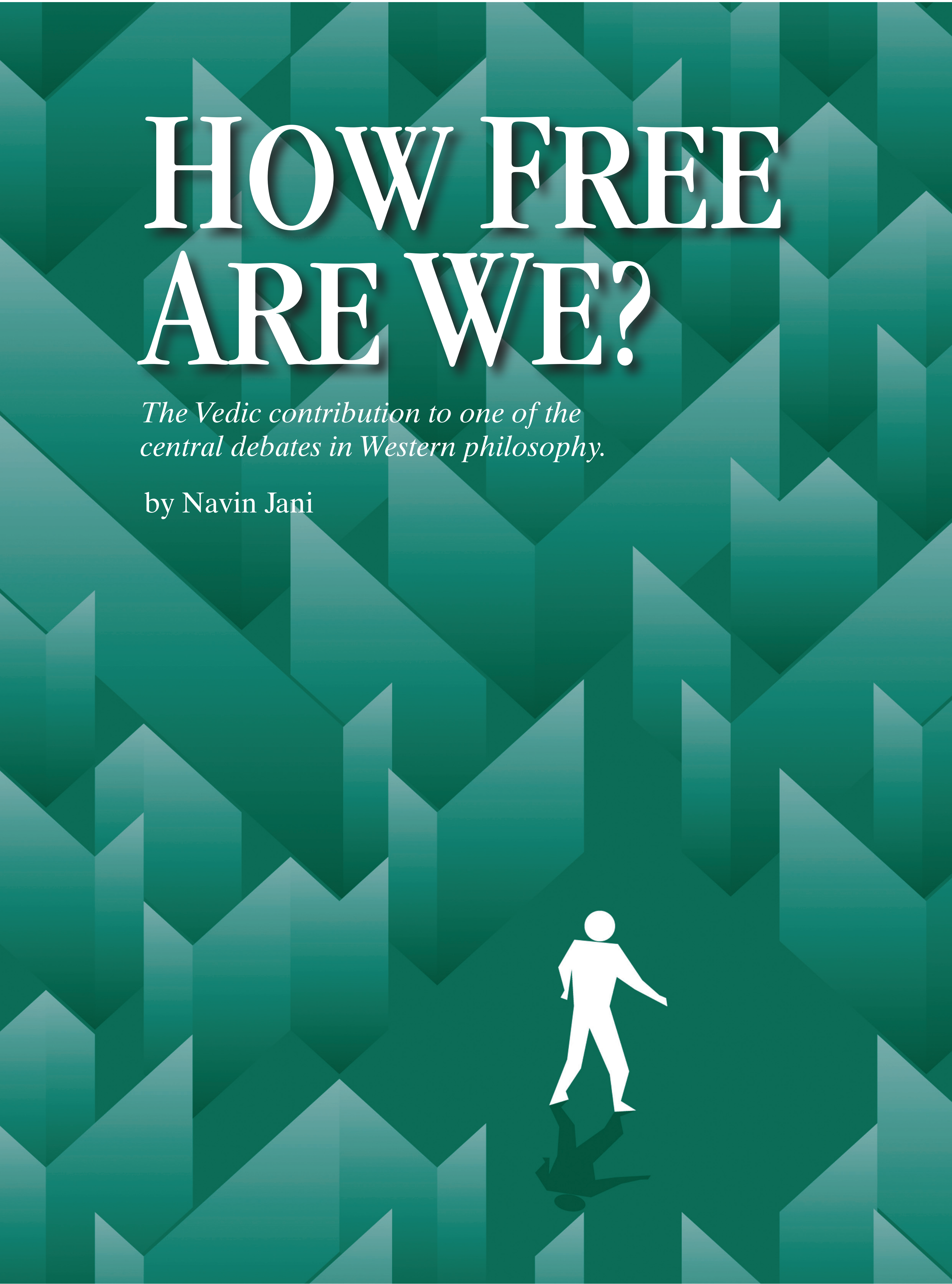
What keeps you committed to Kṛṣṇa consciousness?

Go to Krishna.com/inyourownwords and let us know. Please keep your answer to under 150 words. Replies will appear in our Sept/Oct issue. Deadline for submissions is June 15.

HOW FREE ARE WE?

The Vedic contribution to one of the central debates in Western philosophy.

by Navin Jani



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SAM SURYA goes to his city's orphanage one day and makes a large donation. Elsewhere in town, Andy Andhakara robs a bank. What led these two to make such drastically different choices? Was it their own volition, or the force of some other factor? In other words, were their actions predetermined, or did Sam and Andy have free will?

These questions concern one of the pivotal debates in Western philosophy. Are human beings destined to follow a set course? Are we like children on an amusement park ride that lets them steer right and left but inevitably takes them along a fixed track? Or are we free to desire and do as we like, our lives a blank slate upon which we may write anything and everything?

In this article we'll take a brief look at how Western philosophy has addressed the problem of determinism versus free will, and then suggest how the Vedic literature can offer additional insight into this most elusive yet important issue.

Before we begin, let's be clear about the term *will.* From a philosophical perspective, it is a nuanced concept that has undergone shifts in meaning over the years. Nevertheless, for all practical purposes it can be taken as synonymous with "action." Hence the debate over determinism versus free will is essentially a quest to identify the cause of human behavior. Keeping this in mind should help keep you from getting lost in what might otherwise become a hazy jungle of abstract philosophical jargon.

Strict Determinism

One perspective on this debate is to say that Sam Surya was destined to donate and Andy Andhakara was destined to steal, and neither ever really had a say in the matter. This is the theory known as strict determinism. It holds that all human actions are the direct results of a sequence of causes and effects such that they are predetermined and can unfold in one and only one way. Thus, we do not actually play any part in determining our actions. Rather, they are caused by something beyond us. Western philosophers have generally been loath to embrace this view, and with good reason: strict determinism is contrary to both common experience and the norms of civilization.* Far from feeling forced into every action we take, we instinctively feel we can make choices in our lives. Therefore, the thought that we have no control whatsoever over what we do is repulsive. And the laws that govern society have meaning only if citizens can decide to follow them or not. For example, we would perhaps support punishing Andy Andhakara to send a message to the community that stealing is bad and others should not follow his example. But if citizens don't have the power to decide to steal or not, then what's the use of sending such a message? Therefore, strict determinism can be rejected as counterintuitive and highly impractical.

Categorical Free Will

Having rejected this extreme, let's test out the other. As strict determinism tells us that Sam and Andy each had to act in a particular way, the opposite perspective tells us they could have acted in absolutely any way. This is the theory known as categorical free will. It holds that human actions are in theory completely unconstrained and can unfold in an infinite number of ways. Our behavior is not the preset product of any grand universal scheme, but is fluid and flexible. It essentially has no cause, for that would limit its course.

Unlike the theory of strict determinism, which has had few adherents among Western philosophers, the theory of categorical free will has been embraced by many, including the French philosopher

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*The doctrine of the predestination of souls, espoused by St. Augustine in the fifth century and championed by the leaders of the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century, is one major exception.

Rene Descartes in the early seventeenth century and the German philosopher Immanuel Kant in the late eighteenth century. Indeed, it is a welcome relief from the stifling rigidity of determinism, and it resonates with Western notions of liberty and independence. But as other philosophers have pointed out (including those named in the next section), it goes too far. They argue that a phenomenon either has a cause (or causes) or is completely random; there is no third option. Therefore to say that human actions have no cause is to say that they are random. But observation of the world around us shows that this is clearly not the case. We don't see mothers hugging their dirty laundry and throwing their babies into the washing machine. Rather, in place of such inexplicable chaos (the logical consequence of this theory) we observe order and meaning in human behavior. Hence, categorical free will must also be rejected as illogical and unrealistic.

To say that human actions have no cause is to say that they are random. This is clearly not the case.

Soft Determinism

So while strict determinism leaves us with no room to breathe, it turns out categorical free will opens the door far too wide. Neither theory allows for us to have a conscious influence on our actions. What of the middle ground, something between these two extremes? Such a perspective would allow Sam and Andy to cause their actions in some way that reconciles determinism and free will. Human behavior could then be understood as neither capricious nor automatically enacted irrespective of individual wishes.

Countless persons have endorsed some such compromise—including the English philosophers Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and John Stuart Mill—and it more or less represents the consensus of contemporary Western philosophy. Among these, the mid–eighteenth-century Scottish philosopher David Hume made what is arguably the chief presentation. His theory has been referred to as soft determinism because it takes strict determinism and alters it in a way that allows for personal freedom and moral accountability. He starts with the notion that every human action has a cause that determines how it will unfold. If this cause is something external to the individual, he refers to the resultant action as involuntary. If this cause is an internal desire of the individual, he refers to the resultant action as voluntary. Whereas in strict determinism all actions are caused by external forces and are therefore what Hume would call involuntary, his soft determinism allows for both external and internal causes. Indeed, he emphasizes the latter by explaining that human beings will always act according to their strongest internal desire unless forcibly constrained by some external factor.

Hume concludes by deeming such voluntary action "free" and therefore liable to moral scrutiny. Thus, under Hume's theory, Sam's donation is considered to be causally determined by his desire to donate, and yet is also considered free because it is done willingly. Andy's act of robbery is caused by his desire to acquire money, but he remains morally culpable because he was not forced to act against his wishes.

Although with Hume's soft determinism we finally have a theory that connects individuals with their behavior, whether it does so in a way that gives them actual freedom is questionable. Granting that it avoids the oppressive impersonalism of strict determinism and the chaos of categorical free will, does it actually bestow on humans the power of conscious choice? Critics have said no. They have noted that although under Hume's theory individuals act voluntarily, they do not act freely. This is because the internal desires that cause their actions are not under their conscious control. For example, Sam voluntarily acts in accordance with his desire to give charity (and so feels like he is acting freely), but where does this desire come from? Did he choose to have the kind of personality that is inclined to give?

No. We could either trace its development through his experiences, education, and parenting, or resign ourselves to a simple, "He was born that way." In either case, we must acknowledge that the very factors that resulted in Sam's wanting to help out the orphanage are clearly not subject to his conscious control. Rather, his desire is the deterministic product of his background, and it compels him to act accordingly. He is not free to act otherwise. Thus, we are not justified in calling Sam's and Andy's respective actions free, and praising or censuring them accordingly. In fact, soft determinism ultimately leads us to the same dead end as strict determinism, albeit with a little more scenery on the way.

Although strict determinism and categorical free will proved easy to dismiss (both in this article and in the annals of Western philosophy), you will likely agree that soft determinism seemed more promising. But it still left us short of what we are searching for: a viable explanation of the cause of human action. Certainly the answer does lie in some sort of synthesis of determinism and free will, but Western philosophy can take us no further in this direction. We therefore now consider the philosophy of ancient

India. Within the Vedic scriptures we find a perspective that genuinely reconciles determinism and free will in a way that makes sense to our heads and is agreeable to our hearts.

The Soul's Free Will

We begin by reviewing the deterministic side of the equation. Kṛṣṇa explains in the *Bhagavad-gītā* that all living beings have eternal spiritual forms of which the physical bodies we see are only temporary coverings. The root cause of this encasement is known in Sanskrit as *ahaṅkāra*. Though this term is usually translated as false ego, it literally means "I am the doer." Because we are made of spirit, not matter, we have no ability to independently manipulate matter, and to think we do is the ultimate binding delusion. Far from being a controller, by inhabiting a physical body we come under the control of nature, because the body, being matter, acts according to the laws of nature. The real agent behind the movements of the material world is the energy of God in the form of the three material principles, or modes: maintenance (goodness), creation (passion), and destruction (ignorance). Kṛṣṇa sums up this whole dynamic by observing, "The spirit soul bewildered by the influence of false ego thinks himself the doer of activities that are in actuality carried out by the three modes of material nature." Thus, our freedom does not lie in the tangible realm of physical matter.

To some people the implication of such evidence (see sidebar for another example) is that free will is simply illusory and that enlightenment involves accepting that we are the powerless pawns of a deterministic world. Historically, Western philosophers have even been led to clump the Vedic worldview together with other Eastern philosophies and dismiss them all under the condescending label of "Asiatic fatalism." But this is only half the Vedic equation. Equally compelling (and arguably even more important) is the Vedic evidence of freedom and the power of conscious choice.

Prescience and the Vedic Literature

ONE ASPECT of the Vedic culture—knowledge of the future—may seem at first glance to contradict free will, but this is not so. In fact, St. Augustine's explanation of this phenomenon in relation to the omniscience of God parallels the Vedic understanding. Others had argued that if God already knew what we were going to do, that would prevent us from having free choice; we could not help but act in the way God had foreseen. In response, Augustine explained that God's vision of the future does not cause anything to happen. Rather, it is akin to human vision of the past. We have the ability to *re*-member past events, but this doesn't mean we cause them. Similarly, God has the ability to *pre*-member future events, but this doesn't mean His doing so curtails human liberty. He is simply beyond time, unlike us, and He can therefore observe past, present, and future all with equal ease.

The Vedic literature ascribes a similar ability to God, but it goes further by allowing that human beings may share this ability. One method is by practicing the appropriate yoga and acquiring the *siddhi* (mystic perfection) of *tri-kāla-jña*, literally "knower of the three times" (i.e., past, present, and future). It is interesting to note that this ability is considered one of the less important and more easily obtainable of the various Vedic mystic powers.

Another means to prescience is through astrology. By looking at the arrangement of the stars and planets at a person's precise moment of birth, an expert astrologer can divine much about that person's personality and life. In fact, it is said that the great sage Bṛghu Muni, fearful that no qualified astrologers would be available during the present fallen age of Kali, created natal horoscopes for every person on earth for the next 427,000 years.

For example, the Vedic literature contains a plethora of rules, regulations, and rituals. Many prominent Vaiṣṇava philosophers have used the same logic we cited earlier in defeating strict determinism to claim that such scriptural prescriptions (and their associated rewards and punishments) can have meaning only if the living entity has some degree of factual independence. Indeed, "The Supreme Personality of Godhead has so dexterously formulated and applied the laws of material nature governing punishment and reward for human behavior that the living being is discouraged from sin and encouraged toward goodness without suffering any significant interference with his free will as an eternal soul." (*Śrimad-Bhāgavatam* 10.24.14, Purport by Prabhupāda's disciples)

It is important to note here, however, that as the mind is considered material in the Vedic understanding, it is subject to the same rigid control that was attributed to the body above. So just as the free will of the living being cannot extend to the actions of the physical body and senses, so too it cannot extend to the actions of the mind or intelligence. Thus, the free will Prabhupāda speaks of must be restricted to the domain of the spirit soul proper, and it must be the actions of this soul that merit the various punishments and rewards he speaks of. But how does the soul act? Prabhupāda explains that it is through desire. Not only that, he goes one step

(*please turn to page 56*)

Chris Bryant

KULI MEL

The Tipping Point

Members of ISKCON's next generation join forces and find the key to unlimited achievement.

by Madhava Smullen

A

DARKNESS ENVELOPS the large field, save for a stream of light emanating from a stage at one end. The glow reveals hundreds of young people waiting eagerly for the next act to appear. When the band finally strides onto the stage, donning guitars and wielding drumsticks, the crowd erupts in an exultant roar, hands punching the sky.

Here is a generation of kids who love rock music. They gaze up at the rock stars in admiration, holding their lighters and glowsticks aloft during the gentle, melodious parts, then jumping, screaming, and moshing once the tempo picks up. But as soon as the singer belts out the lyrics, you know these kids are different. “Vande Kṛṣṇa, Nanda Kumara, Nanda Kumara, Madana Gopāla,” they sing along in perfect unison, closing their eyes, calling out the prayer with feeling.

They are *gurukulis.*

Translated as “student in the family of the guru,” *gurukuli* generally refers to students in a *gurukula,* a teacher’s ashrama where traditional education is given. ISKCON ran several *gurukula* boarding schools for its chidren throughout the 1970s and 1980s, most notably in Dallas, Māyāpur, and Vṛndāvana. Unfortunately, although many who attended hold good memories of friendship and spirituality, they also had to bear the brunt of much inexperience, fanaticism, and even abuse.

After the first *gurukula* alumni left these schools and went their separate ways, they began to search each other out and discovered strong bonds, both through their love of Kṛṣṇa and understanding of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and through their shared experience of hardship. They began to hold reunions, and soon found a group dynamic, an international family they could rely on, people they could trust without ever having

Opposite page: Enthusiastic young Kṛṣṇa devotees join a free-for-all Garbha dance at last summer’s Kuli Mela in West Virginia.

met them before.

In the 1990s, *gurukulas* began to decline. Most closed down and some turned into day schools as the social structure of ISKCON changed and devotees hastened to remedy the mistakes of the past. But the term *gurukuli* had caught on, and the new generation of Hare Kṛṣṇa youth stepped into it comfortably, joining the family elder *gurukulis* had created.

The last power chords of the song fade away, and the crowd bursts into tumultuous applause. Now, in the new millennium, *gurukulis* from all generations have come together to see what they can do for their future.

Welcome to Kuli Mela.

A Mela Is Born

Every great idea has a birthplace. For this particular one, it was the 2004 *gurukuli* reunion in sunny Alachua, Florida. As usual, everyone was having a great time, swimming in the natural cold springs and partying late into the night. But one *gurukuli,* Baladeva Keilman, CEO of Commodore Gaming in Amsterdam, was looking for something more.

"I was thinking about how strange it was that people made such an effort to come to these reunions, flying across the country and even across the globe, with no real purpose but to hang out," Baladeva says.

An idea began to form in his mind. He called up his friend Kapila Monet, a business developer for a London publishing company. When he expressed his desire to provide a more vibrant, productive, and Kṛṣṇa conscious alternative to reunions, it was as if he'd just flicked an electric switch.

"Yeah!" Kapila said. "We should have a huge festival with thousands of people, and an all-night Kṛṣṇa conscious rave, and a helicopter showering lotus petals, and everyone drinking mango nectar! And let's have conferences and seminars and . . ."

"Whoa, whoa," Baladeva said, grinning on the other end of the line. "We'll see. Let's talk about it when I get back."

Whipping up a frenzy of preparation immediately upon Bala's return, the two talked about the project to virtually anybody who cared to listen, soon enlisting many other *gurukulis.* Govinda Gosh took on entertainment and food, Bhimasena Jones was key in operations and logistics, and Chaitanya Mangala asked, "What are you going to do for *our* kids?" and then answered it by taking on the responsibility of a kids' camp himself.

Chris Bryant

More than seven hundred gurukulis *gather in the hills of New Vrindavan (left) for fifteen hours of stunning homegrown entertainment. Kuli Mela's head organizers (below) make a triumphant closing speech. Left to right: Chaitanya Mangala Walker, Govinda Gosh, Kapila Monet, Baladeva Keilman, and Bhimasena Jones.* Gurukulis *fan Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa on their swan boat (bottom) during an exuberant midnight* kīrtana.

Chris Bryant

Jivana Wilhoit

Gauravani Buchwald (below) and Acyuta (opposite page, bottom left) lead gurukulis *in singing the holy names in Kuli Mela's "*bhajan kutir,*" which broadcast the* mahā-mantra *over loudspeakers throughout the day.*

Chris Bryant

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Chris Bryant

The team bandied about different possible names for the event, such as Kulistock and Kapila's favorite, Kulipalooza, before the right one hit—Kuli Mela! Just as with the world-famous Kumbha Mela in India, they were holding a huge spiritual gathering of people from every corner—albeit, they hoped, with fewer loincloths and waterpots. What better name?

They drew up proposals, soon attracting the encouragement and financial support of heavyweights Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Dāsa, Ambarīṣa Dāsa, Hari Kṛṣṇa Dāsa, and His Holiness Rādhānātha Swami. Before long, they had raised $30,000, fulfilling their goal.

But things weren't all bright and breezy. They might have organizers and funding, but what was the point if no one turned up? They had hoped for an attendance of at least three hundred, with ambitious back-up plans for eight hundred. But to date, fewer than fifty people had registered on the website.

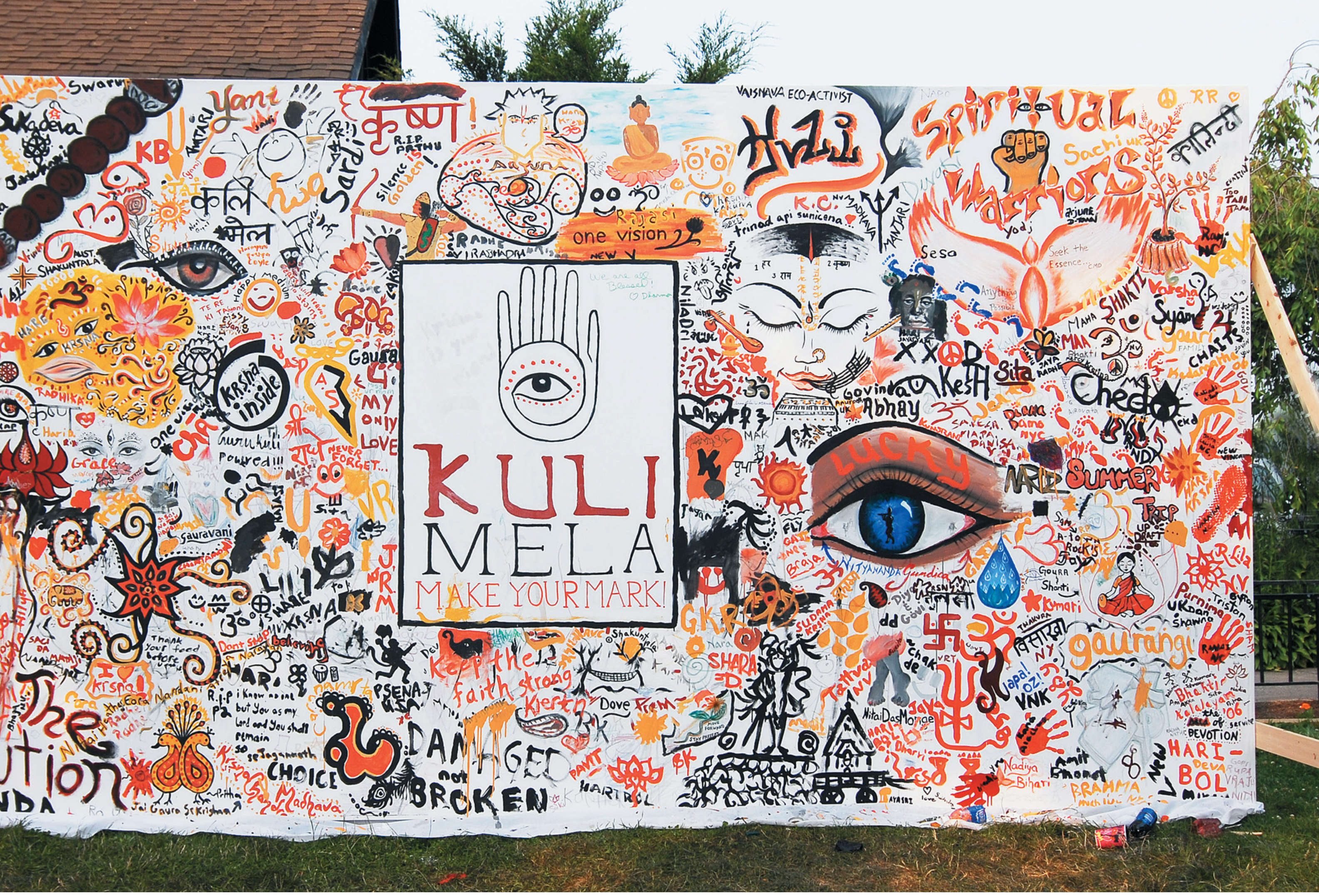
And there was only one month to go . . .

A Snowballing Success

It's a warm blue summer's day in New Vrindavan, West Virginia. This reporter is at Kuli Mela to do a seminar on writing, and I'm now helping Kapila organize conference venues—or, more specifically, running back and forth manhandling flip-charts, tables, and plastic chairs—along with my namesake Madhava, a grinning Canadian *gurukuli* who I'm sure is at least eight feet tall. *Gurukulis* began arriving yesterday, June 14, 2006, and already it's as busy as an ants' nest.

"If anyone wants to organize an event like this, I'd give them one piece of encouragement," Kapila says, squinting in the sun. "These things snowball. We've already got 540 registrations, most of them in the last month. And I'm sure there'll be many more attending without registering. Govinda Gosh hasn't even registered yet—and he's one of our organizers!"

And that isn't the only thing snowballing. Before today, Kapila had no team for handling registration. But now, twelve


KULI
MELA
MAKE YOUR MARK!
Spiritual Warriors
one vision
Krsna inside
DAMAGED not BROKEN
Keep the faith strong
gaurangi
LUCKY
SUMMER
DEVOTION
HARI-BOL

Chris Bryant

Chris Bryant

Kisori Joshi (above) adds her contribution to the Kuli Mela "Make Your Mark" board (top), where kulis *could express themselves artistically.*

gurukulis are sacrificing hours of their day for the job. Neither had he anyone for organizing conference venues, but now here we are, six dedicated workers and five helpers.

"Now *that's* what makes *kulis* different," Kapila tells me, pointing out the right room to a helper swaying under a colossal Leaning Tower of Chairs. "The ability to step up and say, 'I know what service is.'"

He's right. Over the next few days, an incredible two hundred people volunteer in different ways throughout the festival. Altogether, over seven hundred attend, each offering service in their own way, even if it's just taking part, expressing themselves, and giving energy to one another.

And what energy! Every evening, *kulis* applaud, cheer, and dance to their heart's content as a vast storehouse of artistic talent is mined to provide fifteen hours of drama, dance, stand-up comedy, a fashion show, and a host of varied musical artists.

Yet entertainment is just the beginning. True to the statement on

A panel of ISKCON leaders and gurukulis (above) offer their knowledge and advice during the event's largest plenary conference: Community and Spiritual Development. Gurukulis *attend one of the Mela's sixty seminars (left), covering four categories: business and career, arts and entertainment, community and spiritual development, and health and medicine.*

Kapila Monet

A mṛdaṅga student for six years in India, Bhima Karma (right) teaches the skill to an enraptured audience. Bottom: cooking for more than seven hundred people.

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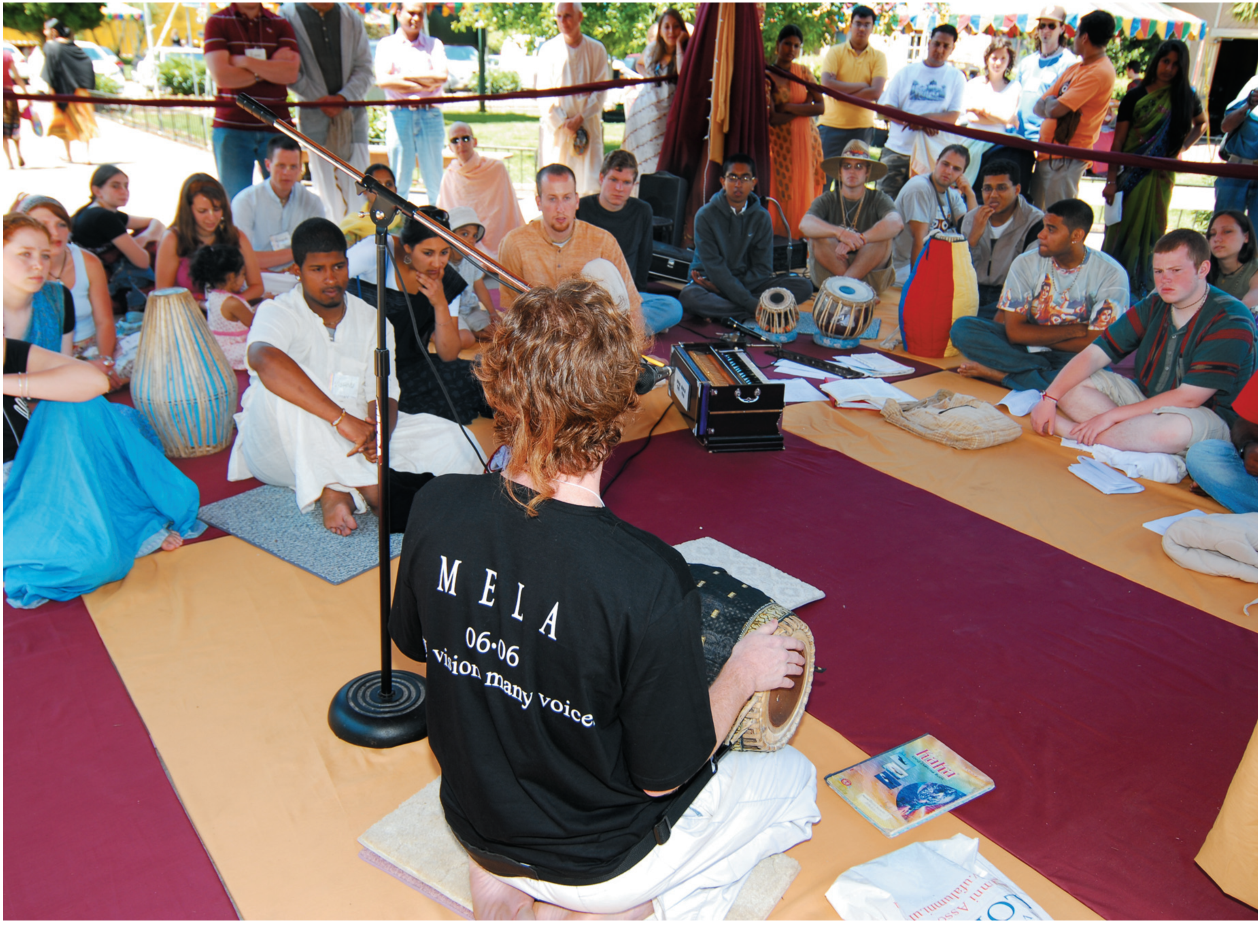

Chris Bryant

their website, Kuli Mela is intent on "Exploring who we are and what we can accomplish materially and spiritually." Shifting the balance of *gurukuli* gatherings from hanging out to networking, connecting, being genuinely productive, and defining our material and spiritual futures, it offers a vast variety of ways to achieve these. Over four days, there are no fewer than sixty seminars, conferences, forums, and workshops, covering four main areas: business and career, arts and entertainment, community and spiritual development, and health and medicine. Truly caring for the future, there's even a kids' camp for the children of *gurukulis,* with storytelling, group games, arts and crafts, gardening, cow protection, and singing.

Gurukuli veteran Gauravani Buchwald is excited: "When we, the first generation of *gurukulis*, see an event like this, we know all that hardship and sacrifice we went through was for something, was worth something. This new generation of *gurukulis* has something we didn't have: a culture of people who are loved and cared for, and supported, and raised with heart. And we can help create that."

Rādhānātha Swami, ISKCON guru and leader, is so inspired that he extends an open invitation: "There will be a Hare Kṛṣṇa explosion in America if your generation just takes the baton. Don't wait for us to give it to you. Take risks and do it. And you will definitely be divinely empowered with great success."

But when I ask Kapila how he manages to cope with such stress and organize such a huge event, he replies simply, "There's a certain point when you realize that you can only do as much as you can, and leave the result to Kṛṣṇa."

The Vision Behind The Mission

Kuli Mela had originally been planned as a one-time event because, as Kapila says, "Those have a much stronger dictate to attendance." But by 2007 the Kuli Mela spirit had spread, the psychology of what it means to be a *gurukuli* was beginning to evolve, and similar events were being organized in Los Angeles, Alachua, and as far afield as Radhadesh (Belgium) and Moscow. Kapila's idea of "The Tipping Point," lifted from a book of the same name, which discusses how a single small concept that's sold well can change the minds of millions of people, was beginning to work. So this February, I met with Kapila, Baladeva, and Alachua organizer Govinda Syer to find out what, exactly, this concept was.

"I feel that *gurukulis* have a purpose, and I'm trying to find ways in which we can develop that," Bala says. "Kuli Mela was about coming together as a community, making us feel part of a common goal or purpose, and giving us a strong sense of identity. But it was also about finding out how the upbringing and knowledge we share can help us to become successful and happy people, how it can help us in our daily lives."

KRṢṆA KRṢṆA

Rasacarya Partin

Some kulis *bond around sports (top). Krishna Chandra (right) relishes a plate of the delicious* prasādam *served three times a day. ISKCON's second and third generations (far right) enjoy each other's company at the Kuli Mela Kids' Camp. Creating stable families and communities is one of Kuli Mela's main objectives.*

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Jivana Wilhoit

For most *gurukulis,* of course, daily life is, or will be, trying to be productive so that they can support themselves and their families. So how will Kṛṣṇa consciousness fit into all of this?

"Chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa really helps me to remember what's most important in life, and keeps my mind clear and more focused," says Bala. "It also helps me to remain detached in the cut-throat world of business. Things are always so up and down, but I know that whether I have success or failure, I'm not the one in control."

At the end of a particularly tough day at the office, Bala can sit down in front of his Gaura-Nitāi deities and contemplate.

"I just look at Them, and see that They're still smiling, and I think, 'I know You're looking out for me somewhere in all of this. And all I can do is accept that, knowing that it's all part of Your plan for me, and there will always be something, some lesson, to be learned.'"

Govinda Syer, an avid businessman since the age of sixteen, also chants and prays to Kṛṣṇa every day before he goes to work.

"I want *bhakti* to be part of my life in all areas, even business," he says. "I think that whatever we do, if we do it to serve Kṛṣṇa, that makes it a good cause. So my overall objectives with my business are to create a place for devotees to work, to give myself the financial resources to do the spiritual projects I want to do, and to give my part to financial stability in the devotee community."

Financial stability is very important to this generation of devotees, determined as they are to "invite Lakṣmī into our community in a functional way."

"Money is a tool we need to use, not reject. I feel that as a society, ISKCON has become too reliant on donations from stakeholders who

Chris Bryant

are only loosely associated with the movement itself, and that can be quite fickle," Kapila says. "Whereas if we actually create a society of stakeholders within the movement, who are following through on their paths, ambitions, and determinations, and really seeing their own person flourish in a material sense, then they'll feel inspired to offer the results to the benefit of the movement as a whole."

As Bala points out, the parents of *gurukulis* left everything to give their lives to the movement, and this was a necessary move for Kṛṣṇa consciousness to spread as much as it did. But now it's our responsibility to maintain what we have and begin a true *varṇāśrama* society with a perfect material and spiritual balance—this, as far as the organizers are concerned, is the essence of Kuli Mela, and of the future.

"If we imbibe that balance and

Rajasi's Nitai Hanna (above) sings the mahā-mantra, *hard rock style, to a crowd of moshing fans. Arjuna (below) demonstrates his skills on the didgeridoo, an Aborigine instrument. The author (top right) joins a delighted audience at one of the event's many stage performances. Anapayini Jakupko and her troupe (far right) dazzle with their colorful Bharata Natyam performance.*

Jivana Wilhoit

Jivana Wilhoit

Jivana Wilhoit

pass it on to our children," says Bala, "then they'll be in the perfect situation, with Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy and the temple on one side, and a stable family environment on the other, one not disassociated from the outside world. They can then have the perfect balanced start in which to grow up and be well educated and live successful lives."

This vision is also, ultimately, Kuli Mela's method of spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

"ISKCON and the Hare Kṛṣṇas are no longer novel," Bala says. "People have a stagnant misconception of who we really are. It's as if we've reached a plateau in how we're able to preach and infiltrate society."

And then his eyes light up.

"But we can change that. When people start meeting devotees who are successful artists and musicians, business people in the top layers of big companies, even presidents of countries, and see that they believe in Vedic knowledge and practice Vaiṣṇavism, they'll start to ask, 'What's this stuff about? How does it help?'"

"We're more intermingled in the world, and that leaves us no boundaries," says Govinda Syer. "And we have this knowledge. So let's give it out to everyone."

Boundaries begin to disappear this summer, as *gurukulis* all over the world take up the Kuli Mela mantle in their local area. The Los

Kuli Mela Info

A DVD documentary of Kuli Mela 2006 by RasaFilms is available at the Krishna.com store. All proceeds support Krishna.com and future Kuli Melas.

Local Kuli Melas will be held at the following locations:

June 2007, Moscow, Russia
http://www.kulimela.bala.ru

June 2007, Alachua, Florida
http://www.alachuakulimela.com

August 2007, Los Angeles, California

The next major Kuli Mela will be held in August 2008, in Radhadesh, Belgium.

For further information, visit:
http://www.kulimela.com
http://www.myspace.com/kulimela

Angeles *gurukuli* reunion will be developed to include more networking, a stronger agenda, entertainment, and a more exciting location. Russia will kick off international action with a Moscow Kuli Mela this June. And Alachua, Florida, will have a five-day event with all the features of the original Kuli Mela, highlighted by a focus on the local community.

"We don't want it to be just like, 'Oh, that was a fun event,'" says organizer Govinda Syer. "The idea is that there's actual serious action that continues on. So the event will give birth to spiritual study groups, temple participation, mentoring programs, after-hour education, business networking, and much more."

Meanwhile, European Baladeva Keilman is planning a Kuli Mela in Radhadesh, Belgium, for 2008, with an estimated attendance of four hundred.

"Europe is very disjointed because of community, culture, and language barriers," he says. "I want to have a festival that combines all the different nationalities and groups and draws all the estranged *gurukulis* back together."

In the end, his dream is to have every *gurukuli* who ever was attend at least one Kuli Mela event.

"Together," he says, "We can change the world."

Nodding in agreement, Kapila throws in his final two cents, hinting mysteriously, "Look out for a mega Kuli Mela one of these days."

I'll see you all there. Keep an eye out for Kapila—he'll be the one flying a helicopter over the four-thousand-strong crowd, showering them with lotus petals and pouring mango nectar into their open mouths. ❁

Madhava Smullen grew up in the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement in Ireland. He now serves on the editorial staff of Back to Godhead.

HOW FREE ARE WE?

(*continued from page 43*)

further to reveal that the desire whether "to surrender to God or not is the essential expression of our free will."

And there, at last, is our answer and the Vedic resolution of the problem of determinism versus free will. As human beings, our freedom is limited to desiring to come closer to God or to move farther away from him. Material nature, under the supervision of God, takes care of the rest. According to our past desires, we are provided at birth with a suitable body through which the modes of material nature help us perform actions appropriate to those desires. Within the constraints of this body, which range from our mental disposition to the karmic results due to us while in it, we have the opportunity to form new desires. These desires may take many forms, but they will always be reducible to one of two broad categories: desires to be closer to God, or desires to be farther away from Him. Our new desires then create karmic reactions that determine our next body.

No Deterministic Dead End

This Vedic understanding of free will thus saves us from the dead end that soft determinism led us to. We can trace the manifold desires that cause a person to act back from the upbringing of his present life to his nature at birth, to the desires of his previous lives, and, underlying it all, to his progressive desire to surrender to or rebel against God. Freedom reigns at this final, primary level, while determinism dominates all subsequent links in the chain. We could thus call the Vedic model a sort of binary free will.

For example, Sam Surya, in his previous birth, must have had godly desires (e.g., selfless desires to forego pleasures for a higher purpose). As a result, he was probably born with an innate generosity and received good training from his parents and early teachers, both of which allowed him to progress towards God. Andy Andhakara, on the other hand, must have had ungodly desires (e.g., selfish desires that focused on his own well-being at the cost of others), which led him to be born in a degraded situation favorable for expressing and acting upon such desires. The key to understanding how this works is in realizing that karma applies on a subtle, as well as a gross, level. Good actions don't just create good circumstances; they also create the desire to do further good actions. And vice versa.

Unlike the blank slate of free will or the fixed track of determinism, this blend of the two might be likened to an interactive movie that lets you make choices at key moments and then unfolds automatically until the next decision. If we make choices favorable to reestablishing our relationship with God, like Sam Surya, we'll get more and better options of this kind the next time. If we make choices that hamper our connection with God, like Andy Andhakara, the godly options will diminish in scope and quantity. Either way, what happens in between the decision points is the preset product of innumerable past choices.

When we finally evolve to the point where we unreservedly and uninterruptedly desire only to be closer to God, then we break the chain of successive physical bodies and can return to the divine abode. There, having revived our original spiritual bodies, we will be completely independent of the laws of nature that so rigidly control us in this world. Thus we come to the ultimate paradox of free will. When we are at every moment lovingly offering our free will at the feet of God for His pleasure rather than ours, then and only then are we the most free. ❁

Navin Jani is pursuing a doctoral degree at the University of California, Irvine, studying Vastu Vidya and spiritual aspects of design. He lives in Irvine with his parents and his wife, Kṛṣṇa-priyā Devī Dāsī.

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Now available at the Krishna.com Store. (See page 63 for details.)

SPIRITUALITY

(*continued from page 12*)

These findings indicate that spirituality provides inner joy, which frees people from the uncontrollable and insatiable craving for external pleasures that leads to addictions and suicides. Such findings have inspired some modern thinkers to echo the Vedic conclusion that spirituality is not just a part of our life; it is the essence of our life. Stephen Covey, well-known author of the *Seven Habits* series, aptly remarks, "We are not human beings on a spiritual journey. We are spiritual beings on a human journey."

Science is clearly showing that human life spent for material enjoyment is ecologically, physically, and spiritually disharmonious and disastrous. Science is also strongly indicating that when we strive for spiritual happiness, we benefit our planet and our body too. The Vedic scriptures offer us a balanced program of material regulation and spiritual growth for achieving the highest potential of human life. *Bhagavad-gītā* (6.17) states that regulation in eating, sleeping, work, and recreation, coupled with spiritual practices, paves the way to freedom from all material miseries. The most potent and practical spiritual practice for the modern age is the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra.* By chanting we can achieve a state of happiness that will fully satisfy us, and we will never be disturbed by any material upheaval. (*Bhagavad-gītā* 6.22)

It's time to stop using the Mercedes for plowing. It's time to put our human vehicle into gear by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. Then we can speed along the highway of devotional service, back to our long-lost home with Kṛṣṇa.

Caitanya Caraṇa Dāsa, a disciple of His Holiness Rādhānātha Swami, holds a degree in electronics and telecommunications engineering and serves full-time at ISKCON Pune. His free cyber magazine, The Spiritual Scientist, *gives a scientific presentation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. To subscribe, write to ccdas@pamho.net.*

LORD VARĀHA

(*continued from page 37*)

the demon's fists could smash stone, to the Lord his pounding felt like a garland of flowers.

Now the demon resorted to sorcery, creating an illusion of fiends, thunderstorms, turbulent winds, ominous clouds, and a downpour of boulders. But the Lord's Sudarśana disc dispelled the illusion. Hiraṇyākṣa then tried to crush Lord Varāha in his arms. But the Lord, not limited by time or space, eluded the demon's grasp. When Hiraṇyākṣa tried one last assault, the Lord struck him at the root of the ear. Though the Lord struck him casually, Hiraṇyākṣa reeled with bulging eyeballs and collapsed like an uprooted tree. Smeared with the demon's blood, Lord Varāha's cheeks turned red, just as an elephant becomes red from digging in the earth.

The Sages' Praise

The sages of the higher planetary systems glorified Lord Varāha as *māyāmaya*, or the Lord of all knowledge, mercy, and illusion: He had omnisciently located Mother Earth, benevolently restored her position, and easily defeated Hiraṇyākṣa's magic.

The sages also praised Lord Varāha as the unconquerable enjoyer of all sacrifices. Lord Kṛṣṇa corroborates this in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (5.29), where He depicts Himself as *bhoktāraṁ yajña-tapasām*, or the ultimate beneficiary of all sacrifices and austerities. From *Śrī Īśopaniṣad* (Mantra 1) we learn that everything is the property of the Supreme Lord and thus the devotee aims to please the Lord by using everything in His service. On the other hand, anyone foolishly desiring to enjoy the property of the Supreme Lord is destroyed like Hiraṇyākṣa.

The sages described Lord Varāha's skin as identical to the Vedic hymns and His bodily hairs as the pure *kuśa* grass of Vedic rituals. Thus they expressed how Lord Varāha's transcendental body is itself Vedic sacrifice. Whoever satisfies Lord Varāha, therefore, has already attained the supreme goal of all Vedic wisdom, sacrifice, austerity, and penance.

Aja Govinda Dāsa, a disciple of His Holiness Hanumatpreśaka Swami, is pursuing a master's degree in computer science at Harvard University. Last year, he obtained his B.S. in electrical engineering at the age of seventeen, with a perfect 4.0 GPA. He was a 2005 Top Ten Scholar for Boise State University and an Eta Kappa Nu top graduate in the USA.

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*The full list appears in the January/February and July/August issues, and is always available at Krishna.com, where the list also includes Krishna conscious gatherings.

The Form of Truth and Beauty

THE COMPATIBILITY of truth and beauty has long been a topic of interest to philosophers. The British poet Keats might have hoped to end the discussion when he wrote, "'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,'—that is all / Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

Śrīla Prabhupāda discussed the topic in an essay written in the 1950s. He told the graphic story of a beautiful woman who intentionally made herself ugly by taking strong purgatives. She thus "separated the ingredients of her beauty" and stored them in pots to repulse an unwanted suitor. Prabhupāda's main point in the essay is that the beauty of this world is illusion (not truth) but there is an eternal beauty that is truth.

The concepts of truth and beauty strike me as similar to other dual aspects of nature, such as intellectual/emotional and right brain/left brain. To be well-rounded human beings, we need to develop both sides of our nature.

Prabhupāda emphasized that a one-sided approach is especially insufficient in the area of ultimate reality, which human life is meant to pursue. In his purport to *Bhagavad-gītā* (3.3), Śrīla Prabhupāda makes this memorable statement: "Religion without philosophy is sentiment, or sometimes fanaticism, while philosophy without religion is mental speculation." We might say that religion without philosophy is all heart and philosophy without religion is all head. To be physically alive, we need both head and heart; to be figuratively alive (living a fulfilling life), we need both the figurative head and the figurative heart. In other words, our nature—the nature of reality, in fact—includes both the intellectual and the emotional.

The Sanskrit word *bhaktivedānta* accurately conveys this idea: *bhakti* means "devotion," and *vedānta* means "the goal of the *Vedas*" and generally refers to the philosophical quest for Truth. Prabhupāda's title "Bhaktivedanta" signifies his stature as an accomplished theistic philosopher. The Vaiṣṇava philosopher, whom Prabhupāda exemplifies, concludes that the philosophical search for Truth ends in Kṛṣṇa.

The aesthetic and the intellectual find their fulfillment in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The Truth—or the Absolute Truth—is in fact beautiful. He is the source of all beauty. And nowhere in the religious literature of the world can one find more exquisite descriptions of God than in Vaiṣṇava books and poems about Kṛṣṇa.

In Vedic cosmology, the higher one goes in the universe and beyond, the more beautiful are the residents of the various realms. The beauty of the women of the heavenly planets allures those who follow the sections of the Vedic literature that promise great material rewards. But the beauty of the heavenly damsels pales in comparison to that of Kṛṣṇa's beloved *gopīs.* And despite their beauty, the *gopīs* can't resist the attraction of Kṛṣṇa.

That same supremely beautiful person spoke the most eloquent philosophy on the Battlefield of Kurukshetra. Even one line of *Bhagavad-gītā* can resolve centuries-old philosophical debates for anyone willing to give a sympathetic ear to Kṛṣṇa's enlightening words. Well-rounded Vaiṣṇavas diligently study those words. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī writes that philosophical discussions on spiritual topics "strengthen the mind. Thus one's mind becomes attached to Śrī Kṛṣṇa." Lord Kṛṣṇa says that one who studies the *Gītā* "worships Me by his intelligence."

Ultimately, *buddhi,* intelligence, should lead to *bhakti.* As Kṛṣṇa says (Bg. 10.8), "The wise . . . engage in My devotional service and worship Me with all their hearts." —*Nāgarāja Dāsa*

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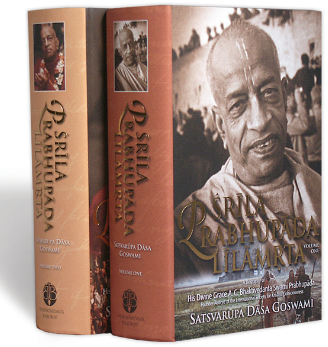

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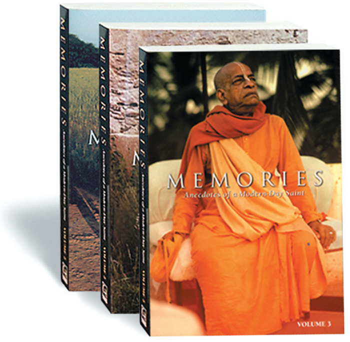

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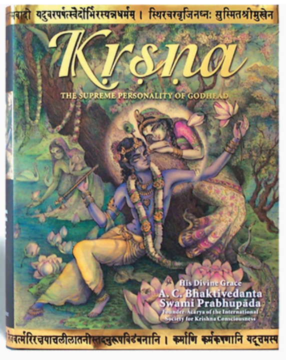
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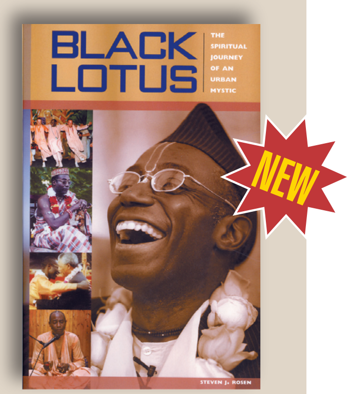
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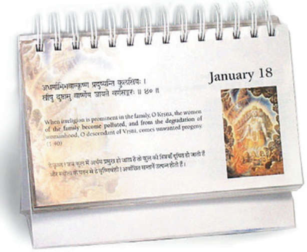

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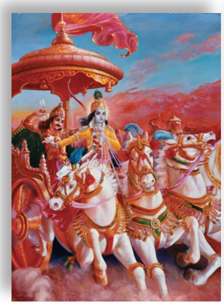

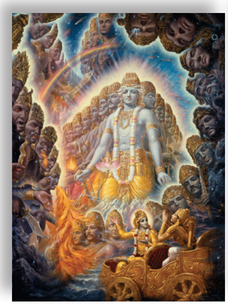

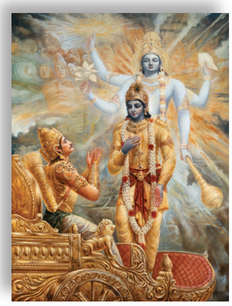

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Light Blue
Lavender
Blue

FOR MEN

White Cotton Kurta (Regular Collar)—Traditional white kurta with rounded four-button neckline and side pockets. The medium-weight 100% cotton is cool and comfortable. Choose from short or long sleeves. Made in India. **$13.95** GPAM62R

Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Harināma Chadar (Golden Yellow)—Traditional 100% cotton wrap printed with Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* (in Sanskrit). Made in India. **$8.95** GPAC741

South Indian Cotton Dhoti (Colored Border)—High-quality white 100% cotton, with woven colored border. Choose border color: Blue, Red, or Maroon. Made in India. **$15.95** GPAM62B

FOR LADIES

Printed Cotton Sari—Our most popular sari for everyday wear. These medium-light 100% cotton saris are comfortable and wash well. The white background is printed with small flowers that mirror the more intricately decorated headpiece. Choose from Light Blue, Lavender, or Blue. Made in India. **$19.95** GPAS49C

Pullover Knit Choli—Match your sari with one of our comfortable pullover 100% cotton cholis. Choose from small to x-large. Made in India. **$7.95** GPAW7PC

FOR KIDS

Chikan Kids' Kurta (White)—This long-sleeve traditional kurta is perfect for either boys or girls. The full, straight cut and hip-length hem give this kurta a simple, easy-to-wear style. 100% cotton. Includes chikan-style embroidery. Choose from sizes x-small to large. Made in India. **$13.95** GRAK23K

SRI
RADHA
a
b
c

Śrī Rādhā Bead Bag (Teal Green)—Embroidered flowering vines entwine the words "Sri Radha" on this 100% cotton bead bag. A full 19½" around at the widest, 10" from top to bottom. Made in India. **$5.95** GPGB350

Tulasī Japa Beads—Find the perfect sized *japa* beads for your mantra meditation. Made of sacred Tulasī wood.

a. *Maha*: approx. 68" around. **$10.95** KCGJ606
b. *Medium*: approx. 58" around. **$7.95** KCGJ605
c. *Small*: approx. 48" around. **$6.95** KCGJ603

Boys' Dhoti—A High-quality white 100% cotton dhoti with a fancy red and green border for young boys. Approximately 36" from hem to hem, and 94" long. Made in India. **$8.95** GPAK350

Girls' Sari—This simple 100% cotton sari in bright colors and beautiful prints is perfect for young girls. Approximately 35" from hem to hem, and 102" long. Pattern may vary from the one shown. More colors available on-line. Made in India. **$14.95** GPAK450

Krishna.com store 1.800.800.3284 or 386.462.1241

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Musical Instruments

Classic Tabla Set*—The tabla is a set of two Indian drums used in classical, popular, and religious music. The larger drum is made from strong steel, and the smaller drum is carved from a hard, dark wood. The strong leather heads are bound to the drums with leather straps. The large drum is 11½" tall and 37½" around at the widest. The drum head is 9" wide. The small drum is 10" tall and 25" around at the widest. It's head is 5¼" wide. NOTE: The circular bundle of cloth the drum is set on for stability while playing is called a chutta. The color of the chutta and the head-cover will vary from the color pictured. Made in India. **$89.95** S2MV525

Classic Indian Harmonium (Deluxe Teakwood)*—Strength and beauty combine in this specially designed Classic Harmonium, custom built for Krishna.com. Made of teakwood, 21" x 11½", and 9½" tall. Three octaves, pure brass fittings, 3 sets of German reeds, single-fold bellows. **$489.95** S2MH435

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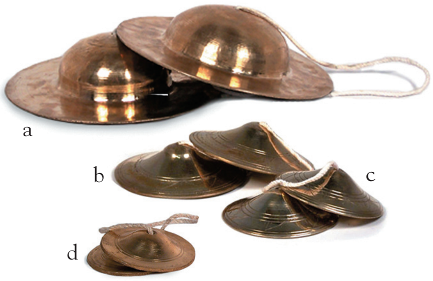
*Orders outside US, $6 plus 25% of order. **Security code. Orders cannot be processed without 3-digit code on back of card.

Māyāpur-Style Mṛdaṅga (Brass Body)*—The strong, resonant sound of this brass *mṛdaṅga* is sure to get your *kīrtanas* jumping! This drum combines the look of a clay drum with a brass body, for a great-sounding, durable drum. Approximately 22" tall and 49" around the center. Large drum head is 8" across; small is 3½". Made in India. **$129.95** KXMM530



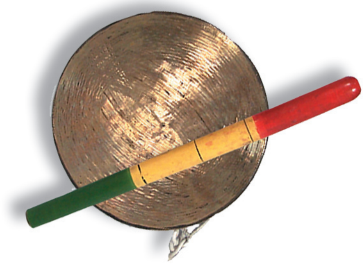
Karatālas—Traditional Indian hand cymbals for accompanying devotional songs. Made of sturdy and melodious bell metal, with fabric holding ties.

a: *Brass "Whomper" Karatālas*—6½" in diameter. **$13.95** S2MK345

b: *Brass Karatālas, Medium*—3¼" in diameter **$11.95** S2MK332

c: *Brass Karatālas, Small*—2¾" in diameter **$7.95** S2MK331

d: *Kids' Karatālas, Medium*—2½" in diameter **$3.95** S2MK24K



Brass Gong—Strike the center for a loud sound; strike the sides for a higher pitch. This durable brass gong is about 7" in diameter and 1½" deep, and weighs about 1½ lbs. **$22.95** N3MV353

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*NOTE: These are large items. If you have questions about the safest way to ship them, please call us at 1-800-800-3284, or send us an email at store@krishna.com.

VEDIC THOUGHTS

Men do not understand that because they unrestrictedly kill so many animals, they also must be slaughtered like animals in big wars. This is very much evident in the Western countries. In the West, slaughterhouses are maintained without restriction, and therefore every fifth or tenth year there is a big war in which countless people are slaughtered even more cruelly than the animals.

His Divine Grace
A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.26.5, Purport

O King, in the age of Kali people's intelligence will be diverted by atheism, and they will almost never offer sacrifice to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is the supreme spiritual master of the universe. Although the great personalities who control the three worlds all bow down to the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord, the petty and miserable human beings of this age will not do so.

Śukadeva Gosvāmī
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 12.3.43

One should associate with devotees, chant the holy name of the Lord, hear *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam,* reside at Mathurā, and worship the deity with faith and veneration. These five limbs of devotional service are the best of all. Even a slight performance of these five awakens love for Kṛṣṇa.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu
Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta,
Madhya-līlā 22.128–129

Lord Kṛṣṇa resides in the land of Gokula in Mathurā-maṇḍala. At His two sides are Rādhā and Candrāvalī. . . . Lakṣmī, Durgā, and the Lord's potencies are expansions of Śrī Rādhā.

Puruṣa-bodhinī Upaniṣad
(Quoted in Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa's
Vedānta-syamantaka 2.37)

The manifestation of unadulterated devotional service is exhibited when one's mind is at once attracted to hearing the transcendental name and qualities of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is residing in everyone's heart. Just as the water of the Ganges flows naturally down towards the ocean, such devotional ecstasy, uninterrupted by any material condition, flows towards the Supreme Lord.

Lord Kapila
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.29.11–12

Persons inclined to Lord Viṣṇu's devotional service, which negates the philosophy of impersonalism, are pure followers of Vedānta. Māyāvādīs are pseudo followers of Vedānta. Therefore since they consider the illusory energy of the Lord and the Absolute Truth to be on the same level, such faulty persons become offenders at the feet of the eternal Lord and His devotees. All good qualities abandon the Māyāvādīs and destroy their constitutional propensity of devotional service to Viṣṇu.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī
Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata, Madhya 19.103,
Commentary

Festival Of India 2007

Schedule for North America

May 19: Baltimore Rathayātrā
June 2: Cleveland Rathayātrā
June 9: New York City Rathayātrā
June 16: Detroit Rathayātrā
June 17: Ottawa Rathayātrā
June 23: Chicago Rathayātrā
June 30: Newark, New Jersey, Rathayātrā
July 4: Washington, D.C., Rathayātrā
July 8: Montreal Rathayātrā
July 10–11: Brampton, Ontario, Rathayātrā
July 14–15: Toronto Rathayātrā
July 18: Winnipeg Rathayātrā
July 21: Calgary Rathayātrā
July 28–29: Edmonton Rathayātrā
August 5: Los Angeles Rathayātrā
August 11–12: Vancouver Rathayātrā
August 19: San Francisco Rathayātrā
August 25–26: Palmdale, California, Rathayātrā
September 1–2: Seattle Rathayātrā
September 3–5: Vancouver Janmāṣṭamī and Vyāsa Pūjā Festival
September 22: Philadelphia Rathayātrā
October 21: Washington, D.C., Rāma Vijayotsava
Late October or Early November: Grand Opening of the Houston ISKCON Temple

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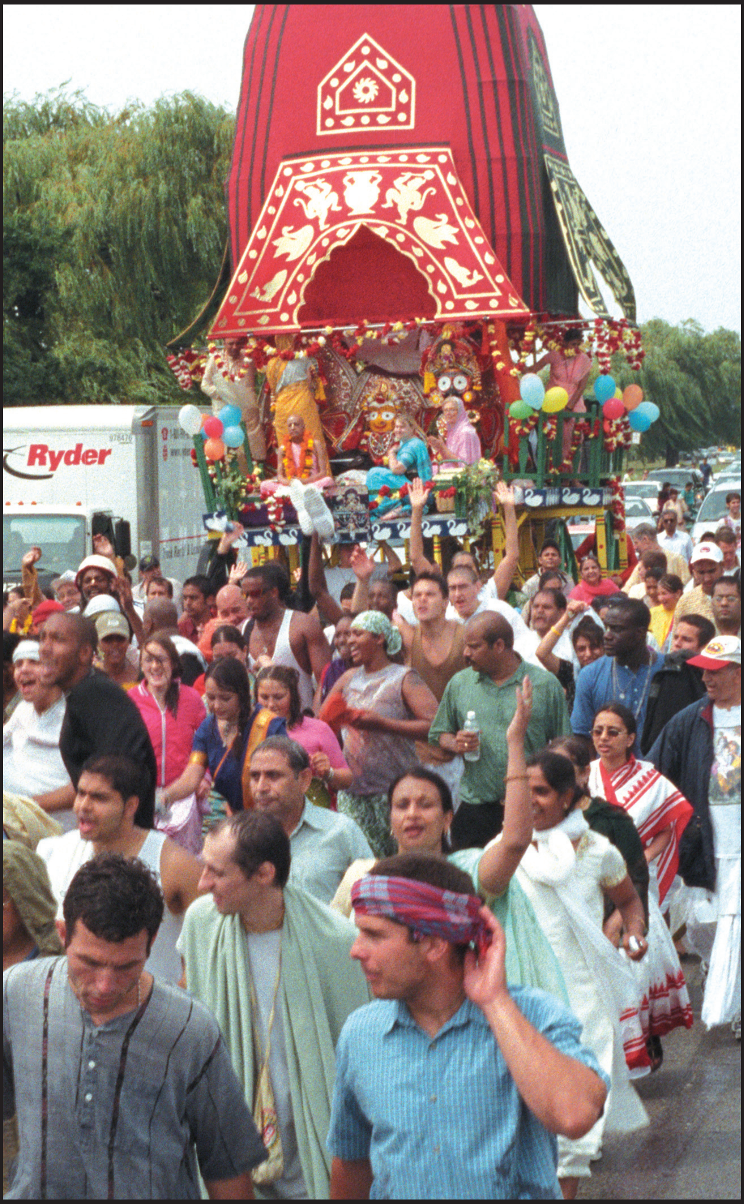
IMPORTANT NOTE: Some of these dates are not yet confirmed. Before scheduling your travel, be sure to confirm the festival dates with the ISKCON temple in the city where the festival is to be held. Or e-mail Festival of India: madhuha@festivalofindia.org.



Bob Roberts

2005 Detroit Rathayātrā